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Iraqi dissident banned entry

AMMAN (AP) — Jordan has turned away an Iraqi dissident at the border with Syria and banned him from entering the Kingdom. A statement by Hizb Al Watan, Arabic for the National Party, said Saturday its chairman, Mashaan Al Jubouri, was prohibited from entering Jordan after a visit to Syria for talks with Vice President Abdul Halim Khaddam on the situation in Iraq. Officials were not immediately available for comment. Mr. Al Subouri is a former close confident of Odai Hussein, the eldest son of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein. In 1990, he launched a trading company for Mr. Hussein in the Kingdom. It closed down a year later after Mr. Al Jubouri fell out with Baghdad. Mr. Al Jubouri announced recently that he was named a spokesman for Lt. Gen. Hussein Kamel Al Majid, Mr. Hussein's son-in-law and the brains behind Iraq's weapons programme who defected to Jordan in August. But Mr. Al Majid denied any connection with him.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Royal Jordanian has the pleasure to announce that its new Information Center at QAIA is now operational 24 hours a day.

Any information concerning the movement of its fleet to and from Amman could be obtained through Tel # 08/53200

ROYAL JORDANIAN الملكية الأردنية

Hamas vows revenge

Thousands turn out at 'engineer' funeral

GAZA (R) — More than 100,000 Palestinians, many of them Islamic militants crying for vengeance, on Saturday buried master bombmaker Yahya Ayyash in one of the largest funerals to take place in PLO-ruled Gaza Strip.

Hamas leaders and Palestinian self-rule authority officials led the mourners, estimated by reporters to exceed 100,000, in a 90-minute march behind Mr. Ayyash's coffin from Gaza City's Palestinen Mosque to a cemetery on the outskirts of town.

Mr. Ayyash, known as the 'engineer,' was said by Israel to be the brains behind a wave of suicide bomb attacks against the Jewish state that killed nearly 80 people. He was killed on Friday apparently by a booby-trapped cellular telephone.

Hamas accused Israel of assassinating Mr. Ayyash and vowed revenge. Israeli ministers neither confirmed nor denied Israel's responsibility but expressed satisfaction he was dead.

"There is blood in our mouths which we want to spit in the face of this unjust world," said Sheikh Nafez Azzam a leader of the militant Islamic Jihad at the grave site.

Hamas spokesman Mahmoud Al Zahhar said the killing ends a moratorium on armed attacks against Israel and urged Palestine Liberation Organisation head Yasser Arafat to return weapons that had been confiscated from its armed wing Izzedeen Al Qassam brigades.

"Even as we have given some a chance to try another approach, the march of half a million people today asserts that Jihad (holy war) is the only option," Mr. Zahhar said at the grave site.

Hamas had suspended attacks against Israel last year under pressure from Mr. Arafat and to allow the PLO to expand its authority in the West Bank.

A number of Hamas guerrillas and some members of the Palestinian police fired shots in the air in salute as Mr. Ayyash's body was lowered into the ground. Some women, who joined the funeral in defiance of Islamic tradition, ululated.

"You are all my sons. Goodbye my beloved son," said Mr. Ayyash's 50-year-old mother Aysheh.

Suspect flees to U.S.

GAZA CITY (AFP) — A Palestinian suspected of being implicated in the murder of master Hamas bombmaker Yahya Ayyash has fled to the United States, sources close to his family said Saturday.

Kamal Hamad, 45, a real estate agent from the village of Beit Lahya in the north of the autonomous Gaza Strip, flew to the United States on Friday at the same time as a mobile telephone exploded in Mr. Ayyash's face.

The explosion occurred in a house in Beit Lahya belonging to Mr. Hamad's sister which Mr. Ayyash was using as a hideout.

Palestinian police, who are investigating the attack, arrested and then freed the sister's three sons several hours after the attack.

But the boys were re-arrested and were still being questioned late Saturday.

Israeli Radio meanwhile said that Mr. Hamad's nephew, Ossama, 27, had fled to Israel, hunted by Palestinian police after being suspected of giving Mr. Ayyash the booby-trapped phone.

At the funeral, Mr. Ayyash's father, Abdul Latif Ayyash, 58, speaking through a loudhailer, told mourners his son had "sacrificed himself for his country and for his people. You are all Yahiya."

The dead man's wife, wearing a white veil, listened from a nearby car, where she cradled their youngest son, born two days before his father was killed.

Hamas activists carry the coffin of Yahya Ayyash during his funeral in the Gaza Strip Saturday. Ayyash, said by Israel to be the brains behind a wave of suicide bomb attacks against the Israeli state, was killed Friday when his booby-trapped cellular phone exploded (Photo by Ahmad Jadallah, Reuters)

Jordan urges stronger role for private sector as Asian group prepares for meeting

By Ghalia Alul and Alia Toukan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan Saturday urged Asian countries participating at a Group of 77 meeting in Amman to encourage the role of the private sector and minimise government intervention in their economies.

Governments should "adjust their policies in order to allow private enterprises to assume a new role that would guarantee their competitiveness in an increasingly market-oriented" economic environment, Minster of Trade and industry Ali Abul Ragheb told the preparatory meeting for the 8th Asian ministerial conference, which will open here Tuesday.

The meeting will address the issues of indebtedness, unemployment, poverty and labour services in the participating countries as well as economic cooperation among developed and developing nations.

Three committees Sunday started separate sessions to draft recommendations for the ministerial meeting, which brings together 46 Asian countries and 26 United Nations bodies and is held once every four years.

Two committees will today draft proposals for enhancing economic cooperation among developing countries and the Amman declaration, which will be issued by the ministerial meeting Thursday.

The third panel, called "Committee of the Whole" will propose a draft agenda for the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD 9), which will be held in South Africa late April.

Mohammed Smadi, secretary general at the Ministry of Trade and Industry, told reporters the Amman declaration committee encountered some difficulties in its discussions.

"These difficulties occurred because of conflicting points of view among attending government representatives.," he said without elaboration on the nature of these differences.

However, Dr. Smadi said that a large part of the Amman document has been agreed upon, and that any differences will be resolved before the end of the conference, which he said will play a significant role in

Continued on Page 3

Government faces pressing issues in months ahead, deputies say

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — If the government closed a page with the endorsement of the 1996 budget, lawmakers did not. To some members of the Lower House of Parliament there are still pressing issues that should be tackled by the government although parliamentarians admit that their role in shaping or influencing government policies is marginal.

"Successive government policies are similar," in nature, says Deputy Abdul Hadi Majali, secretary general of Al Ahd Party. "The government showed understanding of some of the deputies' complaints but there are certain demands that are difficult to meet."

For the most part, independent deputies or those representing different blocs were pragmatic in viewing their role and obligations in a country like Jordan with limited resources. Their analysis of the government policies ranges from criticism to appraisal, but all show understanding not of the government practices and policies only but of their role as well.

"The House does not have the power to draw the financial policies of the Kingdom. There can be discussions but it can not change much," says former Prime Minister Taher Masri.

"There has been no change neither in the budget's goals nor in the deputies' speeches," he adds. "It is the same process that repeats itself (every year) but with different formulae."

NEWS ANALYSIS

While deputies differ over whether this year's budget was "better or worse' than last year's, they recognise that the government was pursuing its policies in the same manner it did always and that the role of Parliament was minimal.

When the government presented the 1995 budget, deputies say, the budget report and later the government reply to the deputies' complaints and demands were based on the dictates of the economic reform plan that started in 1989. The wording might differ and statistics might have changed this year but the general guidelines are still the same, they say.

But this understanding of their limitations did not prevent lawmakers from debating the budget with vigour for three days last week or last year and this does not seem to be going to change in the future. Their criticism of the government policies will continue as long as their demands were not met.

"The government had not taken into consideration most of the recommendations of the Finance Committee that were endorsed last year... it is following the same policy but we have hopes" it will change, centrist Deputy Anwar Hadid told the Jordan Times.

Deputies believe that while the government maintains the same policies, the House's discussions enlighten

(Continued on page 3)

Perry expected to discuss Jordan's arms needs, including F-16s

AMMAN (R) — U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry arrives on Sunday for talks including a long-sought military aid package to modernise Jordan's forces and provide a squadron of prestigious F-16 fighter-bombers.

Western military experts said the ongoing negotiations, which have included a series of visits by U.S. military leaders, would not meet Jordan's initial hopes for a range of new weaponry because of doubts it is appropriate for what they described as "a small, poor country."

However, the experts, speaking on condition of anonymity, said there is now strong backing in Washington for Jordan's request for the single-engine F-16s, the frontline U.S. warplane used by its new peace partner Israel.

While talks in Mr. Perry's first visit to Jordan will cover more than military aid, Jordanian leaders were certain to continue the lobbying that has found a sympathetic audience since the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty was signed.

Financing remains a problem in a time of U.S. budget cuts, but Western military experts believe Jordan is likely to receive between 12 and 16. The value would depend on the price assigned by Washington.

The planes, along with other parts of a military package to modernise a fighting force that had fallen on hard times, are expected to be in use in Jordan this year, the experts said.

The glamourous part of the military aid secured by Jordan following its October 1994 peace treaty with Israel would be the F-16s, a mainstay of Israeli forces.

A separate $100 million package now before Congress would be focused on more mundane needs such as extra trucks, spare parts, upgrades of existing weapons and training. That equipment, termed more vital by Western analysts, would be "off-the-shelf" and available for immediate use.

This reflects the view widely held by foreign military experts that Jordan should focus on basic ways to upgrade its forces to control its borders and maintain internal security.

Instead of the M1-A1 main battle tanks that Jordan would like, they are likely to get upgrades of their present M-60 U.S.-made tanks, the sources said. Jordanian requests for replacements for their current model of Hawk missiles have also been put aside.

However, there is basic acceptance in Washington that Jordan's forces need support, a new sympathy apparent since the Kingdom made peace with Israel and moved firmly back into the U.S.-orbit after opposing the U.S.-led war against Iraq in 1991.

Western analysts now see Jordan holding a key place in Washington's Middle East strategy as a secure and stable U.S. ally.

Mr. Perry arrived in Oman early Saturday at the start of a three-day visit to the Gulf and Middle East that will also take him to Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Israel.

Mr. Perry flew from Ukraine to Muscat where he was to meet on Saturday with Sultan Qaboos Bin Said to discuss U.S. ties with the strategic nation on the western bank of the Strait of Hormuz at the entrance to the Gulf.

Mr. Perry planned to fly to Saudi Arabia later on Saturday for talks with leaders in the kingdom.

It was Mr. Perry's first visit to Oman, a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) of six moderate Arab states and a country which has had economic ties with the United States since the early 1800s.

Oman supported the U.S.-led military alliance against Iraq in the 1991 Gulf war and now has American military ammunition and U.S. air force C-130 cargo planes based on its soil.

Saddam: cooperation with U.N. to continue

BAGHDAD (R) — President Saddam Hussein said Saturday Iraq was still willing to cooperate with the United Nations in the hope of having trade sanctions eased.

In an address marking the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Iraqi army, President Saddam said he had ordered that the utmost effort be made to comply with U.N. resolutions.

"We have reaffirmed once more to the concerned authorities in their field to exert their utmost to respond to the legal demands which enter into relevant resolutions," he said in an address broadcast live on state media.

President Saddam said his instructions were meant to deny "the enemies the chance to blur the situation."

The Iraqi leader, wearing a dark civilian suit and tie, said in the next few months it would become clear what steps Iraq was taking to comply with the resolutions.

"Iraq is able to make good headway towards an end to the U.N.-imposed embargo despite the events of August 1995," he said.

He was referring to the defection of Lieutenant-General Kamel Hassan, his son-in-law and the mastermind behind Iraq's weapons programmes.

It prompted Baghdad to make new revelations about its weapons systems but U.N. arms inspectors said it was still witholding vital information.

The U.N. Security Council said on Friday Iraq had not yet met the conditions for the sanctions to be eased or lifted, and it decided that no change should be introduced to them.

President Saddam said progress was achieved despite the efforts of hostile circles — apparently a reference to the United States.

An Iraqi official, writing in a state newspaper on Saturday, said Iraq was convinced the United States would not lift the ban on its oil exports even if the U.N. declared its weapons of mass destruction had been eliminated.

An easing of the embargo on Iraqi oil exports, part of wide-ranging sanctions imposed on Iraq for invading Kuwait in 1990, is linking to the destruction of its weapons of mass destruction.

Syria urges talks on withdrawal

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syria on Saturday welcomed progress in U.S.-mediated negotiations with Israel but urged the Jewish state to demonstrate its wish to end their state of war by beginning talks on exchanging land for peace.

The official daily newspaper The Syria Times called for Israel to pave the way for a breakthrough in the negotiations by starting discussions on a full withdrawal from the Golan Heights, captured by Israel in the 1967 six days war.

It also called for a clear commitment to an Israeli pullout from South Lebanon, where Israeli troops have occupied an 850-square-kilometre border strip since 1985.

Both Israel and Syria said their peace talks, which are expected to resume next month after two sessions that ended Friday at Wye Plantation, Maryland, were productive.

The discussions since December 27 were the first between the Middle East rivals since negotiations broke off in June over the contentious issue of the Golan Heights.

"The talks have been serious and the two negotiating teams have been open-minded and flexible in discussing procedural issues," an editorial in The Syrian Times said.

"But there is still something necessary to be shown by Israel: It is the clear-cut discussion on full withdrawal from the Golan, South Lebanon, and western Bekaa (in Lebanon)."

The paper said all hopes were pinned on the U.S. administration's efforts and the next shuttle by Secretary of State Warren Christopher, due in the region next week.

Its editorial echoed Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq Al Sharaa, who called for a Golan withdrawal to the pre-six-day war lines but said his country viewed the future of the peace process with optimism.

"We are looking to the future with optimism that a comprehensive and just peace can be put in place," he told the London-based Saudi television channel MBC on Friday.

Syria's Islamists vow peaceful anti-Israel front

By Rana Sabbagh
Reuter

AMMAN — Syria's banned and exiled Muslim Brotherhood group said on Saturday it would "peacefully" oppose any peace deal with Israel if Damascus allowed it to return.

It also welcomed last month's freeing by Syria of 1,200 members and supporters of the group, whose armed uprising against President Hafez Al Assad was crushed in 1982, forcing thousands to flee to Jordan, Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

"In principle, we are against it (peace and normalisation of ties with Israel)," Mohammad Al Sayyed, head of the group's political bureau, told Reuters in Amman.

"But our means, if we are allowed to work in Syria, will be peaceful," he said. "Our opposition will not be more than that of other Islamic groups, say like the Jordanian Islamists."

Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood movement, which has 16 deputies in parliament, opposes peace with Israel. It is leading a vocal coalition of opposition parties who have vowed to revoke Jordan's 1994 peace treaty with Israel through constitutional channels.

Mr. Sayyed and the movement's deputy leader, Mohammad-Naasan Irwany, said during the interview they expected Syria to sign peace with Israel in 1996.

Both also said they did not expect real opposition to the deal in Syria and believed Mr. Assad, Israel's staunchest Arab foe, will not push for warm post-peace ties.

"On (future) normalisation (of links), the Syrian regime will not push for a warm peace with Israel," Mr. Sayyed said.

"Normalisation between the people will take a long time, it won't come by people throwing themselves at it, because in the belief of every Syrian, you can't deal with Jews," he said.

Israeli and Syrian negotiators ended three days of U.S.-mediated talks outside Washington on Friday, hailing unspecified progress on key disputes between them and raising speculation of a possible breakthrough.

Their talks, begun in 1991, have been stuck over Syria's insistence on a full Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights, captured in the 1967 Middle East war, and Israel's demands for normal relations and security arrangements.

"We do not expect any problems (from a peace deal) because the real opposition in Syria was the Islamic opposition, which is now outside Syria or in Syrian jails," Mr. Sayyed said.

"Also, the way which Assad used in the course of the talks will put him in the image of a hero, not one who surrendered. They will present him in a way that he realised strong peace."

The banned group lost its clout in Syria after 1982, and laws set execution as a penalty for membership in the party, whose political and media campaigns are launched from Iraq, Europe and America.

The prisoners' release was welcomed at home and abroad.

U.K. firms said to plot against Saudi dissident

LONDON (R) — Britain's biggest arms companies stood accused on Saturday of working with government ministers and spy agencies to silence a Saudi dissident whose activities risked undermining huge defence deals with Riyadh.

The claims by the Guardian newspaper, based on a leaked report by the chief executive of defence firm Vickers, followed Britain's decision to deport opposition leader Mohammad Masaari to protect trade with Saudi Arabia.

Vickers is bidding for a tank contract with Riyadh as part of the multi-billion pounds Al Yamamah deal signed in the mid-1980s.

In a separate report, the Independent newspaper revealed that Britain's newly-appointed ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Andrew Green, is a non-executive director of Vickers.

Mr. Masaari, 49, has waged a relentless campaign against Saudi Arabia arriving in Britain through Yemen last year. He has accused the Saudi royal family of corruption and called for a peaceful transition to Islamic rule.

Vickers acknowledged this week that it had warned the British government of the threat to its contracts by Saudi anger over Mr. Masaari's activities.

The Guardian document reveals that Britain passed to Saudi Arabia secret intelligence on Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein last year to calm Saudi anger over Mr. Masaari.

The three-page internal memo written by Vickers Chief Executive Sir Colin Chandler also refers to "direct Saudi intervention" against the activist and attempts to "stifle him personally."

Vickers has declined to comment on the leak.

The memo described a discussion between Mr. Chandler and British Aerospace Chief Executive Dick Evans, who reported anxiety in the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) about the impact of Mr. Masaari's campaign.

British Aerospace had also been studying ways of trying to stop Mr. Masaari sending his material into Saudi Arabia through the world-wide Internet computer system.

In another passage, Sir Chandler writes: "Direct Saudi intervention against him (Masaari) could be difficult... because he is the son of a leading cleric in the kingdom."

Mr. Masaari has been given 10 days to appeal against the British deportation order. The Caribbean island of Dominica has agreed to accept him but Mr. Masaari has no connections there.

Former British Armed Forces Minister Sir Archie Hamilton on Saturday defended the government's decision, saying it was right to put national interests first.

"My understanding of it is that the Saudis were making it quite clear that there would be no order for these tanks so long as he (Masaari) remained in London.

"The government took the interests of jobs in... England rather than those of Mr. Masaari," Sir Hamilton told BBC radio.

Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, refused to be drawn on Britain's decision to expell Mr. Masaari.

"It is a measure taken by the British government over an affair which concerns it," Saudi Interior Minister Nayef Ibn Abdul Aziz told the Arabic daily Al Hayat.

It was the first Saudi reaction to the deportation order against Mr. Masaari.

Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat on Saturday greets crowds as he arrives in the West Bank city of Bethlehem to attend Orthodox Christmas celebrations and receive a peace prize awarded to him by the Orthodox Church (Reuters photo)

Arafat receives Orthodox Church peace prize

BETHLEHEM, West Bank (R) — The Greek Orthodox Church gave Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) leader Yasser Arafat its top prize Saturday in Bethlehem for his role in promoting Middle East peace.

Mr. Arafat shared the Golden Peace Prize with His Majesty King Hussein, HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and current Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

Patriarch Diodoros I said in a ceremony at Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity the Greek Orthodox Church had decided "to show our gratitude for your efforts for the sake of peace."

In response Mr. Arafat said: "I feel proud that you have granted me this golden necklace, the prize of peace, the peace of the braves."

"I was hoping that Mr. Yitzhak Rabin who made the peace of the braves with me would have been next to me now. Mr. Rabin who ... has paid the price of the peace of the braves."

Mr. Arafat was scheduled to attend Orthodox Christmas midnight mass on Saturday in Bethlehem.

Bahrain tightens grip on Shi'ite opposition

NICOSIA (R) — A Bahraini dissident group Saturday said riot police attacked worshippers in several areas of the Arab Gulf state Friday night in the latest government crackdown on Shi'ite opposition gatherings.

The Bahrain Freedom Movement, the biggest opposition group, said about 250 riot police besieged the grand mosque in Al Qafool, five kilometres from central Manama, and attacked worshippers attempting to enter it.

"Teargas, rubber bullets and glass-particle cluster bullets were fired," it said in a statement sent to international news organisations.

Travellers said they saw dozens of riot policemen in the area but could not confirm reports of the unrest.

The Bahrain Freedom Movement said cleric Sheikh Mohammad Al Rayyash was arrested after delivering a speech to worshippers in Al Daih village condemning the security forces' clampdown on members of the opposition.

Anti-government protests erupted in December 1994 in Bahrain after the government arrested a Shi'ite cleric, Sheikh Ali Salman, for distributing leaflets calling for the restoration of the parliament.

Sheikh Salman was later deported along with three other Muslim clerics accused of fanning the unrest in which at least 13 civilians and three policemen were killed. The disturbances faded in April.

About 65 per cent of Bahrain's indigenous population belong to the Shi'ite branch of Islam. The country's rulers are Sunni Muslims.

Bahrain's emir, Sheikh Isa Ben Sulman Al Khalifa, has vowed to maintain the government's firm line on unrest.

A tough speech marking Bahrain's national day on Dec. 16 followed anti-government protests demanding the release of political prisoners and the restoration of a parliament dissolved in 1975.

In an incident on Friday, riot police used teargas to disperse another Shi'ite gathering in the Naim area of Manama where, Sheikh Abdul Amir Al Jamri, a leading opposition figure, was scheduled to attend a religious celebration.

"Without any warning, the security forces, most of whom do not speak Arabic, attacked the gathering in an arbitrary manner," the statement said.

It said Sheikh Jamri, a prominent Shi'ite cleric, was held for several hours together with three other leading clerics. Several people were also arrested.

Cyprus president accuses police of killings

NICOSIA (R) — Cyprus' President Glafcos Clerides has accused officers in the island's police force of committing murders with their superiors' knowledge and being involved in gangland corruption.

Mr. Clerides' revelations that Cypriot police were involved in organised crime were contained in a letter he wrote and made public Saturday after the resignation of a senior officer.

Assistant police chief Costas Papacostas tendered his resignation to Mr. Clerides on Thursday, citing reasons of "sensitivity."

"The public opinion was wondering, and continues to wonder, how killings, arsons and explosions can be committed with such ease and police are unable to solve them," said Mr. Clerides in answer to points made by Mr. Papacostas in his letter of resignation.

Of 11 murders and manslaughters committed on the island last year, only three — said to be crimes of passion — were solved. The remaining eight, believed to be connected to criminal gangs vying for control of prostitution and drug trafficking rings, have not been solved.

"My concerns had increased after unquestionably reliable information that murders had been committed by police officers, who, in one case visited a senior officer at his home at 2.00 in the morning and told him of the murder they had committed. The officer said: 'I know everything, be careful'," Mr. Clerides said.

Car bombings are becoming a common occurrence in the port town of Limassol where most of the murders were committed. None of the bombings have been solved. Explosives can be obtained relatively easily in Cyprus.

Egypt's Copts mark Christmas

CAIRO (AP) — Egypt's Orthodox Christians began Christmas celebrations Saturday after a turbulent year that saw a political fight within the church and a failed bid for elective parliament seats.

Christmas eve ceremonies Saturday night include a mass at St. Mark's Cathedral in Cairo said by Pope Shenouda III.

Most families gathered after church services for a party with festive food, including traditional date-filled sugar cookies. Christmas day masses will be held Sunday.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak issued a special holiday message to the pope and his followers "praying to God that he will protect our beloved Egypt."

Kamal El Ganzoury, selected last week at the nation's new prime minister, sent a similar message with "wishes for health and happiness."

The Coptic Church is one of the oldest in Christendom. Its first adherents were converted in the first century after Christ by the Evangelist St. Mark, author of one of the four Gospels.

They are estimated to make up about 10 per cent of Egypt's 58 million people. Most of the rest are Muslims.

Although they are a sizeable minority, the Copts wield little political power in the country.

This year, for example, they were unable to convince the education ministry to intervene to bar several universities with militant Islamic faculty from holding mid-term exams Sunday.

Last fall, a group of Coptic professionals — university professors, lawyers and doctors — pressured the pope to give more power to laymen in management of the church.

The peak of the confrontation came in November, when the group in an unprecedented move put up its own list of candidates for the 24-member Coptic community council that oversees operations. But the pope succeeded in getting approval for the slate he endorsed.

Also last year, some 57 Copts — the largest number ever — ran in November and December elections for the 454-seat Egyptian people's assembly.

None won, although Mr. Mubarak followed tradition and appointed six Copts to the legislative house.

Norway wants family of man slain by Mossad compensated

OSLO (R) — Norwegian Foreign Minister Bjoern Tore Godal urged Israel on Saturday to take responsibility for killing a Moroccan waiter in Norway 23 years ago in mistake for a Palestinian guerrilla target.

Mr. Godal said there was no doubt an Israeli hit squad shot dead Ahmad Bouchiki in Lillehammer after he was mistaken for an agent for guerrillas who killed 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics in 1972.

"Israel must now recognise its responsibility and do the right thing in the Bouchiki case," Mr. Godal said in unusually blunt remarks to Aftenposten, Norway's main daily newspaper. "We are waiting for Israeli action."

A foreign ministry spokesman confirmed to Reuters that the minister had been quoted correctly. Aftenposten said Norwegian patience was running out in the case and that Mr. Godal would bring it up with Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Barak next week.

Mr. Godal said Norway had been pressing Israel informally to accept blame under international law and compensate the Norwegian family of Mr. Bouchiki, an immigrant who had nothing to do with the Munich massacre.

"The response has not been overwhelming so far," he said. "To put it mildly, that Israel killed an innocent man is more than just an assumption. A Norwegian court has established this, but Israel has not faced up to it."

Norway insists the 1974 trial showed that the Israeli secret service Mossad was behind the killing. Norway jailed five people after the shooting but there were widespread suspicions that the alleged Israeli ringleader went free.

Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland asked the late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to look into the case when he was in Oslo to receive the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize with Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

But according to Oslo, Mr. Rabin said in a letter to Mr. Brundtland that Israel would not take responsibility for killing Mr. Bouchiki or comment on reports linking Mossad to the shooting.

Israeli Science and Communications Minister Shulamit Aloni said last week she would support a Norwegian request for Israel to compensate the widow of the slain Moroccan.

The late Israeli General Aharon Yariv confirmed in a 1993 interview that Israeli agents sent to Lillehammer to kill the Palestinian who masterminded the murder of Israeli athletes in Munich did kill Mr. Bouchiki instead.

Murderers of Algerian minister shot dead

PARIS (R) — Algerian security forces have killed two Muslim guerrillas suspected of belonging to a fundamentalist hit squad which gunned down a former Algerian minister, the Algerian official news agency APS said on Saturday.

Quoting an official statement, APS said the two men were hunted down as dangerous criminals by security forces as they were accused of gunning down former Interior Minister Abou Bakr Belkaid four months ago in central Algiers.

The statement identified the two dead men as Mohammad Bouhamoum alias Moh Djetta, a guerrilla ringleader in the Casbah of Algiers, and Abdelhak Khelfaoui.

The death on Friday of the two guerrillas, suspected for several assassinations including the killing of Mr. Belkaid, brought to 19 the number of militants reported shot dead in the last three days.

Algerian forces have killed seventeen Muslim guerrillas in two day-long operations carried out in seven regions throughout the North African country, APS said quoting a separate security statement.

Five among the 17 men killed on last Sunday and Tuesday were shot dead after security forces besieged them near the town of Ain Defla, 115 kilometres southwest of Algiers, it said.

Up to 50,000 people have been killed in Algeria's violence pitting government forces against Muslim guerrillas since early 1992 when authorities cancelled a general election which the Islamists were poised to win.

Camp leaders to help Lebanon army find wanted man

BEIRUT (AFP) — Palestinian refugee camp leaders said Saturday that they would help the Lebanese army track down a Palestinian accused of being behind the murder of a militant pro-Syrian sheikh.

After a meeting, the committee of the 'Ain Hilweh camp said they "wanted to act in coordination with the Lebanese army to find and arrest," Ahmad Abdul Karim Al Saidi, 31.

Mr. Saidi, also known by his nom de guerre Abu Mahjan, is accused of organising the assassination of Sheikh Nizar Halabi Aug. 31.

The representatives of the 70,000-strong camp said they were unanimous in their "desire to hand over Abu Mahjan to the authorities if he is found."

An arrest warrant was issued five days ago and Palestinian officials have been trying to persuade Mr. Saidi to turn himself in. One official told AFP "he is no longer at home."

But a member of Yasser Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), asking to remain anonymous, said that he was "still in the camp" and is due to be handed over to the authorities "to spare the camp residents from any negative consequences caused by the actions of an outlaw."

Mr. Saidi has about 100 armed supporters and was last seen late Wednesday by camp leaders. He has been summoned to appear before a court on Monday.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:00 Shelly Duvall's Bedtime Stories
14:30 Feature film: "The Dream Team"
16:00 The Adventures of the Black Stallion
16:30 ..... Sky Trackers
17:00 Children's Programme — C'Est Pas Sorcier
17:30 ..... Fruits Et Legumes
18:00 ..... Doc. — L'Integrale
9:00 ..... News in French
19:15 Magazine — Sports Et Musique
19:30 ..... News Headlines
19:35 ..... Boogies Diner
20:00 ..... Cinema, Cinema
20:25 The Bold and the Beautiful
21:10 The American Chart Show
22:00 ..... News in English
22:25 Feature film: A Different Affair

PRAYER TIMES

05:05 ..... Fajr
06:28 ..... *(Sunrise) Duha*
11:35 ..... Dhuhr
14:10 ..... 'Asr
16:41 ..... Maghreb
18:04 ..... 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifieh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590.
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrasancta Church Tel: 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541.
Anglican Church Tel. 652826
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 652526.
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel: 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazarene Tel.675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

It will be cold at night. Rise in temperatures is expected. It will be partly cloudy in Aqaba and seas calm.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Min./Max. temp.
Amman ..... 5 / 15
Aqaba ..... 8 / 22
Deserts 4/ 16
Jordan Valley ..... 9 / 23

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 14, Aqaba 22 Humidity readings: Amman 33 per cent. Aqaba 34 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Osamah Al Husseini ... 847289
Dr. Bilal Al Sayyid 890280
Dr. Khalil Abu Marjouh ... 779797
Dr. Hisham Kan'an 790286
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Nairoujh pharmacy 623672
Najih pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qanu 281741
Alquds pharmacy ..... (—)

ZARQA:
Dr. Randa Shahin 995710
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381

RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn 644281/6
Akileh Maternity, J. Amn. 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 6672279
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen ... 777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 607155

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital ..... (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital ..... (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)904090
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital ..... (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital ..... (02)247100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital ..... (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)532015, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

05:30 ..... Bangkok (RJ)
08:00 ..... Aqaba (RJ)
08:35 ..... Jeddah (RJ)
08:55 ..... Larnaca (RJ)
09:20 ..... Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:55 ..... Dubai, Dhabi (RJ)
10:05 ..... Beirut (RJ)
10:15 ..... Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
16:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:00 ..... Brussels, Paris (RJ)
17:45 ..... London (RJ)
18:00 ..... Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
18:25 ..... Athens (RJ)
18:45 ..... Frankfurt (RJ)
19:35 ..... Rome (RJ)
19:55 ..... Vienna (RJ)
21:00 ..... Jeddah (add) (RJ)
22:15 ..... Munich, Rome (RJ)
22:45 ..... Aqaba (RJ)
00:10 ..... Cairo (RJ)
03:50 ..... Sanaa (add) (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

10:30 ..... Sanaa (IY)
12:40 ..... Bahrain (GF)
14:00 ..... Doha (Q7)
14:30 ..... Moscow (SU)
20:10 ..... Beirut (ME)
20:20 ..... Cairo (MS)
23:10 ..... Istanbul (TK)
23:59 ..... London, Beirut (BA)
01:20 ..... Amsterdam (KL)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

05:30 ..... Aqaba (RJ)
06:15 ..... Beirut (RJ)
08:50 ..... Frankfurt (RJ)
11:00 ..... Vienna (RJ)
11:10 ..... Munich (RJ)
11:25 ..... Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
12:15 ..... Athens (RJ)
16:00 ..... Jeddah (add)
20:10 ..... Cairo (RJ)
20:15 ..... Aqaba (RJ)
20:20 ..... Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
20:30 ..... Sanaa (RJ)
20:35 ..... Jeddah (RJ)
20:45 ..... Damascus (RJ)
21:10 ..... New Delhi (RJ)
22:05 ..... Singapore, Jakarta (RJ)
22:10 New Delhi, Singapore (RJ)
22:40 ..... Bangkok (RJ)
22:45 ..... Sanaa (RJ)
23:45 ..... Jeddah (add)

Other flights (Terminal 2)

04:00 ..... Rome (AZ)
07:45 ..... Beirut (ME)
11:30 ..... Sanaa (IY)
13:30 ..... Doha (GF)
15:00 ..... Doha (Q7)
16:05 ..... Moscow (SU)
21:10 ..... Cairo (MS)
02:25 ..... Amsterdam (KL)

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple 700/ 500
Banana 680
Banana (Mukammar) 620
Banana (imported) 880/700
Cabbage ..... 100 / 50
Carrot 260/150
Cauliflower 110/50
Cucumbers (large) 200/ 120
Cucumbers (small) ..... 350 / 220
Eggplant 200/ 100
Garlic 750/500
Grape Fruit 220/150
Lemon 250/180
Marrow (large) 120/ 80
Marrow (small) ..... 230 / 150
Onion (green) 220/150
Onion (dry) 230/ 150
Orange 540/400
Pepper (hot) ..... 260 / 180
Pepper (sweet) 260/180
Potato 260/ 180
Radish 150/80
Spinach 120/80
String Beans ..... 530 / 450
Tangerine 270/200
Tomato 170/100

NEWS IN BRIEF

King meets Louisiana senator

AMMAN (AP)— His Majesty King Hussein Saturday met with a U.S. senator and discussed with him Arab-Israeli peacemaking and other regional issues.Petra news agency reported the meeting with J. Bennett Johnston, 64, a Louisiana Democrat, but provided no details on the talks. Officials, however, said the discussions dealt with progress in the U.S.-backed Middle East peace process, the situation in Iraq and Jordan's energy needs and projects. The senator, a chairman of the Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, also met with Energy Minister Sameeh Darwazeh and other cabinet officials during his three-day stay. He later left Jordan.

British trade team due Wednesday

AMMAN (Petra)— A British trade delegation is due in Amman Wednesday on a five-day visit during which it will exchange views with members of the Federation of Jordanian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and commercial institutions on trade and investment issues.

Tarif to attend Tunis meeting

AMMAN (Petra)— Minister of Agriculture Mansour Ben Tarif will represent Jordan at a meeting of the Executive Council of the Arab Organisation for Agricultural Development which will open in Tunis Wednesday. The council groups the ministers of agriculture of Jordan, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Sudan, Djibouti , Algeria and Morocco. The council will also approve the organisation's plans for the coming two years .

Egyptian trade exhibition prepared

AMMAN (J. T.)—An Egyptian delegation arrived in Amman Saturday to discuss arrangements for organising a 10-day exhibition of Egyptian goods in Jordan .The delegation will meet a number of government and private sector officials and will visit the site of the exhibition, which is scheduled to open on May 4 and last until May 14.

Greek delegation arrives Jan. 8

AMMAN (J.T.)— A delegation from the Air War College of Greece will on Jan. 8 begin a four-day visit to Jordan. The Greek embassy in Amman said the visit, which is in return for a visit to Athens by Jordanian airforce delegation last May, was expected to further strengthen relations between Jordan and Greece.

Jordan urges

Continued from page 1

projecting the region's needs and particularities at UNCTAD 9.

He added that UNCTAD 9 provides an occasion for Asian countries to seek concrete measures that would contribute to the revitalisation and invigoration of the Asian economy.

But Mr. Abul Ragheb insisted that only through the adoption of economic policies that would reduce governments roles in the economy and help release the potential of the private sector can Asian countries attain economic growth and development.

"it is only through such a change that the private sector can assume its responsibility in promoting trade flows, investment and transfer of technology," Mr. Abul Ragheb said in a speech with which he opened the preparatory meeting of the group.

Describing indebtedness as a problem shouldered by the region as a whole, Mr. Abul Ragheb stressed that efforts to resolve it should be launched in consultation with international financial institutions.

The ministerial meeting is organised by the Ministry of Trade and Industry in cooperation with the World Trade Organisation and the International Monetary Fund among other global institutions.

Government faces issues

(Continued from page 1)

the government and influence its policies, though marginally. For one thing, their analysis of the budget and their demands of the Treasury provide the government with a fresh look at people's needs. They can help direct the government's attention to more pressing issues that the government might not have considered.

Opposition proposals to adopt austerity measures instead of raising taxes that "had increased poverty in the Kingdom," might have been disregarded by the government but are necessary to be mentioned at a time when the government is going in the wrong track, according to Mustafa Shneikat, a leftist deputy.

According to Mr. Shneikat, the government should realise that the self-reliance policy it is following might look good on the outside but is increasing pressure locally. Government's dependence on local revenues to achieve self-reliance is based, in its most part, on collecting taxes, a heavy burden on the people, he says.

He says that while the reform programme was mainly aimed at solving problems, poverty and unemployment were increasing. The country's move towards privatisation is going in full speed to the detriment of the economy, he says.

Islamist deputies also note a retreat in the government promises from last year. The only thing "that went up was taxes," Islamic Action Front deputy Hammam Sa'eed says. He points out that the government failed to achieve its promises of achieving economic prosperity.

To Islamist deputies, the deteriorating conditions in the country and the increasing level of poverty and unemployment were due to the persistent policies of pursuing peace with Israel and compliance with the International Monetary Fund's policies.

Although they admit that the government would not change its policies in this regard, Islamists believe that they, as representatives of the people, have to remind the government of what they see as the right path to follow.

Mohammad Oweidah, another Islamist, admits that lawmakers failed to influence the government policies especially in terms of their demands to reduce government spendings. He says, however, he believes that there was an improvement in this year's government response to the House demands.

"Definitely, it is more positive" than last year, Deputy Oweidah maintains.

More rain expected

By Ramadan Rawashdeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Department of Meteorology said Saturday that more scattered showers are expected to fall Sunday as Jordan remains affected by a low depression which has moved to the north east of Syria .

The department said that rainfall was mostly expected in the north and south regions of the Kingdom, with temperatures reaching 10 degrees centigrade during the day and dropping to 4 degrees at night .

The department said that fog formation was expected and warned of poor visibility.

The rains of the past three days have increased by one and a half million cubic metres mcm the amount of water in Kingdom's dams, said Hashem Shboul, Jordan Valley Authority (JVA secretary general Saturday. The King Talal Dam, the largest in the Kingdom with a total storage capacity of 80 MCM, has collected one million MCM, raising the amount of water it holds to 4.4 million MCM, added Mr Shboul.

He told the Jordan Times that the Sharhabil Dam now holds 1.6 MCM of water and the Kafrein Dam, 214, 000 cubic metres.

Mr. Shboul said no more water from these dams will be pumped to the farmlands in the Jordan valley in the rainy season, and this in turn will increase the amount of water reservoir.

He said that in view of the dry weather in the past month, the JVA was forced to increase its pumping of dam water to the farmlands in the Jordan Valley region .

The Department of Meteorology said that the rainfall in Jordan in the past two days was highest in Tafileh, which received 45 millimetres of rain.

Ahmad Lawzi

Senate passes officers law

AMMAN (Petra)— The Upper House of Parliament, The Senate, Saturday endorsed a draft 1996 law on army officers service as was referred to it by the Lower House of Parliament.

Meeting under the chairmanship of its Speaker Ahmad Lawzi and in the presence of Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and cabinet ministers, the Senate also referred to its Judicial Committee a draft labour law as was received from the Lower House, which introduced some amendments to the draft legislation. It also referred to its Finance Committee the 1996 draft budget law, which was endorsed by the Lower House Thursday.

King receives Canadian minister

Premier briefs MacLaren on incentives for foreign investment in the Kingdom

AMMAN (Petra)— His Majesty King Hussein received at the Royal Court Saturday Canadian Minister for International Trade Roy MacLaren and reviewed with him Jordanian-Canadian relations, especially in the economic field.

Speaking at the meeting, which was attended by Chief of the Royal Court Marwan al Qasem and Canada's ambassador to Jordan Michel de Salaberry, Mr MacLaren expressed his country's interest in entering joint economic ventures with the Kingdom.

He said that Canada will help Jordan in drawing up a set of industrial specifications and standards which correspond with international standards .

He also expressed Canada's appreciation of Jordan's peace endeavours and the Kingdom's hosting of the Amman economic summit last year .

Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker also received Mr. MacLaren and discussed with him Jordanian-Canadian relations and cooperation in communications, transport, electricity and joint ventures by the private sectors of the two countries .The prime minister pointed out that Jordan has created a very attractive investment climate, offering investors many incentives, facilities and tax exemptions under a recently endorsed economic legislative package.

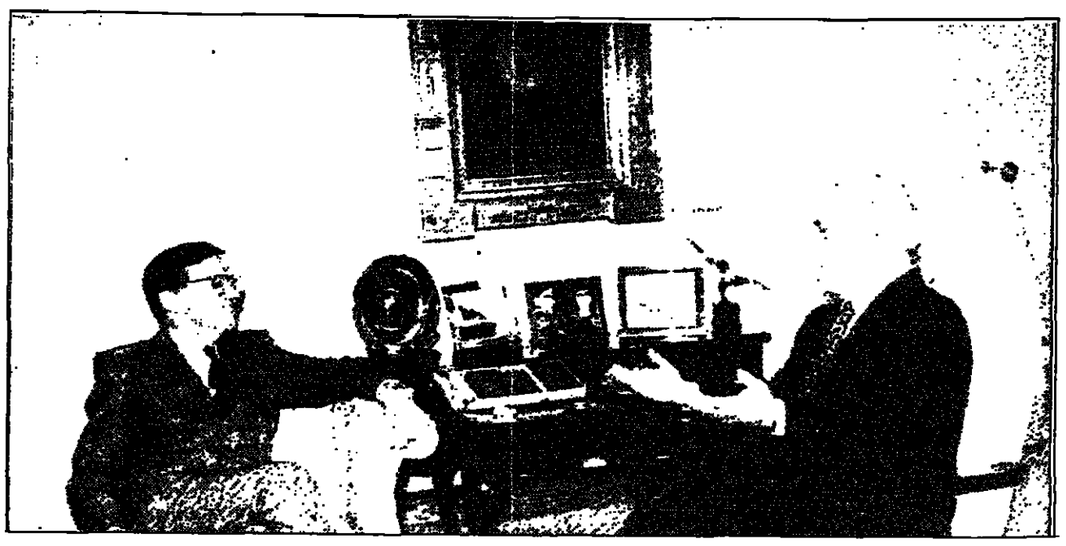
The two sides also reviewed the recent developments in the region and the progress of the peace process on the various tracks , especially the Jordanian-Israeli track.

Mr. MacLaren, who wound up his visit to Jordan later Saturday evening, earlier in the day met Minister of Post and Communications Jamal Saraireh and was briefed on Jordan's current efforts to develop its telecommunications system as well as plans for transforming the Telecommunications Corporation into a private sector company.

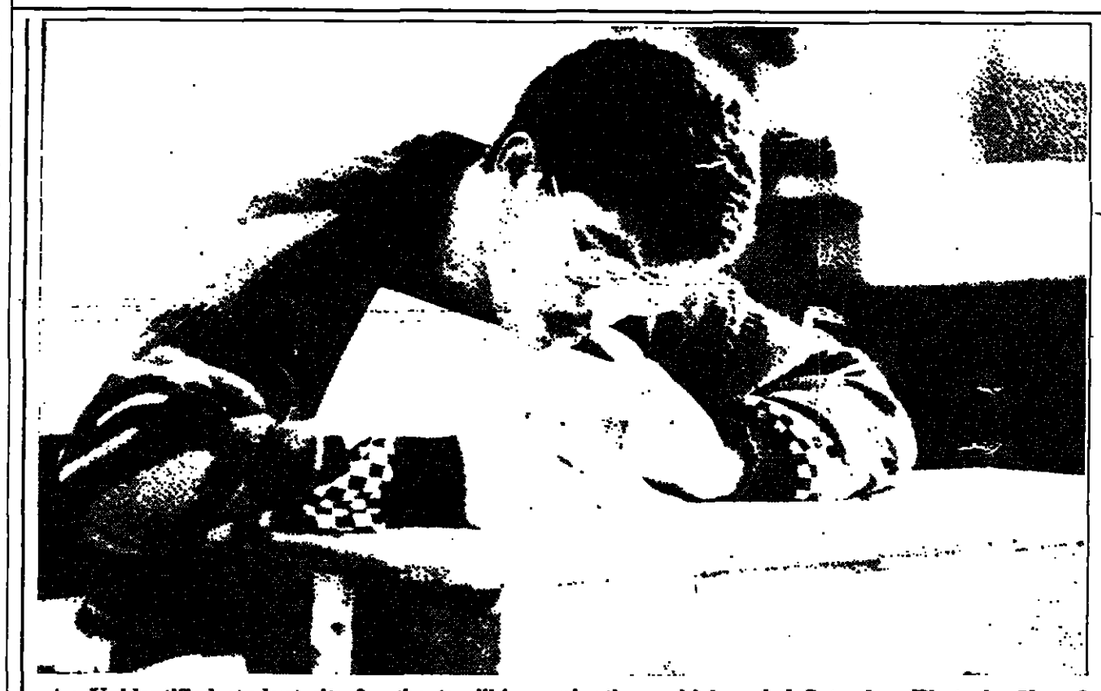
Mr MacLaren reviewed the Canadian government's efforts for supporting Jordan's economic and development plans and lauded the existing strong relations between the two countries.

The Canadian minister later visited the Amman Financial Market (AFM) and met its director general Umayyah Touqan for a review of the market's development.

Market sources said that the Canadian government is currently studying the prospect of providing the Amman Financial Market with technical assistance to help it better handle transactions.



His Majesty King Hussein Saturday receives Canadian Minister of International Trade Roy MacLaren (Petra photo)



An Unidentified student sits for the tawjihi examinations which ended Saturday (Photo by Yousef 'Allan)

96,888 students finish 1st session of tawjihi exams; results expected Jan. 17

AMMAN (J.T.)— The 10-day tawjihi examination session ended Saturday without any complications or problems in the 1288 examination halls across the Kingdom, said Ahmad Abu Tabanjeh, director of Examinations Department at the Ministry of Education.

Speaking at the end of the last examination, Mr. Abu Tabanjeh said that the ministry did not receive any complaints about the examination process in the various governorates or about the nature of questions .

Saying that the ministry had "created the best environment" for the 96,888 male and female students who took the examinations, Mr. Abu Tabanjeh said that the ministry is open to any complaint and would deal with it promptly.

He said that 37 handicapped and sick students and students serving terms in juvenile delinquency centres took the examinations at the same time with the rest of the students under special arrangements.

He said that through a central operations room at the ministry, the Examination Department was able to ensure a smooth examination process .

All the remarks made by students at the examination halls, said Mr. Abu Tabanjeh, are being taken into consideration by the ministry's 7,500 teachers assigned to grade the examinations.

He said these teachers are now conducting their work at six centres in Amman, Zarqa, Irbid , Balqa, Karak and Maan governorates .

A ministry source was quoted by Al Ra'i Arabic daily Saturday as saying that the results could appear by Jan. 17 , ahead of the re opening of the schools doors on Jan. 20 for the second school term.

The tawjihi students are due to take the second session of the examinations in May.

Germany pledges JD 3 million to the Kingdom

AMMAN (J.T.) — Germany has pledged nearly JD 3 million in expertise and equipment to Jordan in accordance with a financial agreement and a memorandum signed in Amman Saturday.

According to German embassy Counsellor Michael Bock, who signed the pledge documents along with Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf, JD 1.5 million of the total pledged will be provided by the German Development Bank under the financial agreement.

The grant, which will be placed in the Studies and Experts Fund, will be used to pay for the services of experts from Germany and Jordan who are overseeing the implementation of German-funded projects in the Kingdom, mainly water projects, and to cover the cost of feasibility studies on new projects to be agreed on by the German and the Jordanian governments.

According to the official, Jordan and the German Development Bank will later sign an agreement to secure the funds for this enterprise .

Mr. Bock said the memorandum on a JD 1.5 million grant covers statistical and other studies in the agricultural sector. The grant will also fund the purchase of equipment and the training of Jordanian cadres in the kingdom and abroad .

Planning Minister Rima Khalaf and German embassy Counsellor Michael Bock Saturday sign a financial agreement (Petra photo)

Illiteracy rate reduced

AMMAN (J.T.)— Jordan last year succeeded in reducing to 13 per cent from 14 per cent the rate of illiteracy among Jordanians aged 15 years and above, according to Khaled Nabtiti, head of the Ministry of Education's General Education Department Saturday.

Dr. Nabtiti said efforts will continue to reduce the rate to eight per cent by the end of this century.

In a statement issued two days before the Kingdom's observance of the World Literacy Day on Monday, Dr. Nabtiti said that the fight against illiteracy among adults continues through a special ministry programme.

Last year, Jordan had 576 such centres, and in the current 1995-1996 scholastic year, there are 573 centres attended by nearly 10, 000 adult students, who receive their basic education free of charge in addition to textbooks and stationery , Dr. Nabtiti said .

These centres have offered basic education to 100.000 citizens in the past 10 years, according to Dr Nabtiti, who added that the ministry opens a literacy centre for every 10 illiterate citizens .

He said that since from 1952 to 1964, education was compulsory until the sixth grade. In 1964, it became mandatory till grade nine and since 1987 it became compulsory till the 10th grade in implementation of the 1987 national education conference .

Saying that the fight against illiteracy is a national duty and a contribution to raising the social and economic living conditions of Jordanians, Dr. Nabtiti said that the ministry has been cooperating closely with various non-governmental organisations to reduce the illiteracy rate.

"The Ministry of Education has been also focusing on preventing school dropouts as best as it could and encouraging those who missed secondary education to study privately or with the help of any of the 60 evening classes set up by the ministry for this purpose," said Dr. Nabtiti.

Police question 2 for blast, Sikhs claim responsibility

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Police Friday began questioning two arrested Kashmiri militants in connection with the deadliest bombing in the Indian capital in two years which killed seven people and injured 35 others.

A city court Friday gave police detectives six days to question suspects Farooq Ahmad Handoo, 30, and Riyaz Ahmad Bhatt, 23, in connection with the blast in Delhi's busiest commercial Sadar Bazaar district Wednesday.

The two were arrested the same day by special branch detectives from Red Fort area, a kilometre from the blast site in old Delhi, a senior police official told AFP.

He said Mr. Handoo previously belonged to the Ikhwan Ul-Muslemeen (Islamic Brotherhood) separatist group and later joined the Jammu and Kashmir Islamic Front (JKIF), which claimed responsibility for Wednesday's blast.

Mr. Bhatt was an "advisor" of the Al-Umer Kashmiri guerrilla force before he reportedly teamed up with the little-known JKIF, officials said, adding that both the suspects came to New Delhi with weapons on Dec. 21.

A security minister, meanwhile, said here Friday that a Sikh separatist organisation from the northern state of Punjab has also claimed responsibility for the Sadar Bazaar bombing.

Minister of State for Home Syed Sibtey Rizvi said the identity of the Sikh group was being "withheld" because of the ongoing investigations into the deadly attack.

"Detectives are investigating all angles" Mr. Rizvi said of the claim by the Sikh separatist group.

The minister said the two arrested suspects have identified themselves as "officers" of the JKIF, while the police said it was questioning some 140 others in connection with the box-bomb explosion.

A male voice describing himself as a spokesman for the JKIF called news agencies Wednesday and claimed that the group had carried out the bombing to avenge Indian "atrocities" in Kashmir.

Police say the bomb, placed in a metal box and left near a scooter in Sadar Bazaar, exploded at a crowded street across from a stand for horse-drawn carts.

It blew out windows and toppled buildings, wrecked cars, scooters and bicycles and started a fire that razed half-a-dozen stores. Six people died instantly and one of the 35 people injured died of his wounds Thursday.

The blast was the deadliest bombing in New Delhi since a car bomb blew up near the office of the ruling Congress (I) Party's youth wing in September 1993, killing 10 people.

Supporters of Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front chant slogans against aggression by Indian forces in India-held Kashmir in Karachi (AFP photo)

Clinton attorney hands over telephone records to Senate investigators

WASHINGTON (AFP) — An attorney for President Bill Clinton Friday turned over copies of missing telephone records Republican Senate investigators sought for years to determine what links Hillary Clinton had to a failed bank.

"These records, which were discovered late yesterday, confirm what we have said all along about the nature and amount of work done by the Rose law firm and Mrs. Clinton for Madison," said presidential Attorney David Kendall in a statement.

"With the public release of these records, yet another set of baseless allegations about Whitewater can now be laid to rest," he added.

Hillary Clinton worked for the Rose law firm in her home state of Arkansas before her husband became president.

The telephone billing records from the firm supposedly will detail the degree of involvement Mrs. Clinton had with the Madison guaranty savings and loan institution.

Madison, which went bankrupt and had to be bailed out with federal funds, is a key part of the Whitewater affair which has plagued the Clintons since he came to power.

The Whitewater affair is a broad inquiry into the Clintons' past business dealings, his campaign for Arkansas governor and whether White House officials improperly intervened in the probe after he became president.

The president said in past interviews that there was "not a shred of evidence" to show he and his wife had done anything wrong.

"What I think about this is that a lot of this is politics," he added.

Mr. Kendall said documents were only discovered Thursday by a presidential aide while she was cataloguing White House materials.

He said the records have been handed over to the independent council investigating Whitewater, Congress and the government agency involved in resolving the cases of bankrupt financial institutions.

"The first lady was not aware until today that these records were located at the White House," Mr. Kendall said in his statement.

Republican Senator Alfonse d'Amato, head of the Senate committee probing Whitewater, said a quick look at the documents sparked more questions about the depth of Mrs. Clinton's involvement and showed that Rose and Madison had more contact than previously revealed.

In a separate development, congressional investigators issued subpoenas for two Clinton associates linked to a White House travel office scandal.

Former White House administrator David Watkins and Hollywood producer Harry Thomason were subpoenaed to testify next Thursday before a committee in the House of Representatives.

Both men knew President Clinton in Arkansas and played roles in the 1993 dismissal of seven veteran employees of the White House travel office.

The Republican head of the house committee said he issued the subpoenas to find out how large Mrs. Clinton's role was in the firings.

Two EU officials arrested, jailed on corruption charges

BRUSSELS (AFP) — Two European Union officials, a Greek and a Frenchman, were arrested and placed in preventive detention Friday in Brussels on corruption charges, the Brussels prosecutor's office announced.

It is the first time in the history of the European Commission that any of its officials have been charged with a crime.

The announcement said the two officials are the former head of the commission's tourism unit, George Tzoanos of Greece, and one of his close assistants, Frenchman Pascal Chatillon.

Mr. Tzoanos' wife was also arrested and jailed, the prosecutor's office said, and the council chamber has five days to confirm or overturn the arrests warrants.

The three warrants were issued after a long investigation made at the request of Brussels examining magistrate Bruno Bulthe, who had been informed by a member of the European Parliament about irregularities allegedly committed by the two EU officials in connection with their duties between 1989 and 1994.

The two men have been accused of having received illicit commissions, some of them ranging from 10 to 15 per cent, for awarding study contracts, assignments and subsidies to entities or companies operating in the tourism sector.

The European Commission made an internal investigation of the two men, which wound up with lifting their immunity as EU officials in March last year.

Friday, the Central Office for Combatting Organised Economic and Financial Crime said the EU budget had suffered prejudice amounting to hundreds of thousands of ecus because of the actions in question. The EU's tourism unit has an annual budget of 7 million ecus ($9.1 million).

It said "that amount might be increased by several million ecus improperly paid on the basis of fictitious studies or projects for purposes of obtaining European Union subsidies in the tourism sector".

Rogatory commissions have been issued for investigations in Belgium, France and Greece. The central office for repression of major financial crime in France said that two businessmen had been arrested who had admitted involvement in swindling and corruption in connection with the two officials.

The case marks the first time EU officials have been charged in a member state with corruption while carrying out their duties. The European Commission is headquartered in Brussels.

'Khun Sa to remain in Burma'

BANGKOK (AFP) — Reputed drug warlord Khun Sa has said he will remain in Burma's Shan state in the face of U.S. efforts to obtain his extradition to face drug charges, the Bangkok Post reported Saturday.

The paper quoted Khun Sa as saying from his Ho Mong headquarters across the border from Thailand: "If I leave, many people will leave with me and I don't want to see that."

"If anything should happen to me, let it happen in Shan state," he added.

The United States this week offered up to $2 million for information leading to the capture and conviction of Khun Sa, who was indicted in a U.S. court in 1989 on drugs charges.

The offer came amid news that Rangoon junta troops had moved into Khun Sa's headquarters in the Shan state after reaching an agreement with Khun Sa's Mong Tai Army (MTA).

In another report, Bangkok dailies quoted Burmese Ambassador Tin Winn as suggesting that eradication of opium production, while remaining a priority, would take some time.

"The so-called drug kingpin has been removed, but the demand for the drug and the cultivation of opium still remains," he said in remarks printed in the nation.

"It cannot happen within one day or one month since people have relied on poppy plantations for more than 150 years. We have to win their hearts and educate them," he told the Post.

The ambassador was meanwhile quoted as saying that Thailand and Burma should be able to settle any boundary demarcation with the end of military action against Khun Sa.

Areas in dispute include a 30 square kilometre section at Doi Lang, which Thailand claims as part of its Mae Ai district of Chiang Mai Province.

Kwangju investigation closes in on military officers

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korean prosecutors confirmed Saturday that they had questioned 10 active-duty military officers including a brigadier general as part of the ongoing investigation of the 1980 massacre in Kwangju.

The prosecution has interrogated the 10 servicemen over the past few weeks, including Brigadier General Kwon Sung-Man, a former battalion commander of the villified special forces, during the Kwangju bloodshed, prosecutors said.

At least 200 people were killed and more than 1,000 others injured when martial law troops loyal to then General Chun Doo-Hwan brutally cracked down on pro-democracy protestors in the southwestern city.

Gen. Chun, who has been in jail since Dec. 3 on charges of masterminding a 1979 military coup, became president in 1980 after strengthening his grip on power through the crackdown. He has not yet been charged with the massacre.

Senior prosecutor Lee Jong-Chan stressed that the active-duty officers had not been questioned as suspected criminals but "interviewed as witnesses."

"We may summon other generals on active duty who are involved in the Kwangju incident," Mr. Lee said.

Newspapers in Seoul interpreted the Lee's statement as an indication that the investigation was closing in on one of the country's top military officials, Chairman of the joint chiefs of staff Kim Dong-Jin.

Mr. Kim commanded a regiment of the 20th division which played a key role in quelling the Kwangju uprising.

The investigation started after incumbent President Kim Young-Sam, who had been ducking the Kwangju issue because of his alliance with the country's military rulers, ordered in November that Gen. Chun and others involved in the massacre be punished.

The policy turnaround was prompted by a slush fund scandal involving Gen. Chun's successor and 1979 coup colleague Roh Tae-Woo, which landed Mr. Roh in jail on Nov. 16.

Gen. Chun faces corruption charges as well in connection with his own slush fund, while Mr. Roh is coming up against charges of helping Gen. Chun stage the coup, prosecutors said.

Labour dispute hardens in Marseille

MARSEILLE, France (AFP) — A month-long transport strike kept most buses and tramways of the streets of Marseille Friday, as talks remained blocked over financing plan, and strikers reacted violently to police intervention.

One non-striking bus-driver had to be hospitalised after strikers manhandled him and threw a tear gas canister.

Meanwhile the underground railway network in the city, the main port on France's Mediterranean coast, was being run by non-strikers, under heavy police supervision.

The transport conflict started in early November as part of a nationwide wave of public-sector strikes against government plans to reform the health, retirement pension and railway systems.

However the Marseille conflict has continued, mainly over pay and working conditions, since the nationwide strikes tailed off in late December.

Officials of the city transport company, RTM, said 80 per cent of bus drivers stayed off the job Friday, as against 70 per cent Thursday. Only 10 per cent of buses and trams were running.

Workers were angered by attempts by the Conservative mayor, Jean-Claude Gaudin, who is also a government minister, to use police to get the transport network moving again. Police were sent in to expell workers from several bus depots.

Officials said angry strikers damaged several buses and attacked some of the drivers who broke the strike.

Costa Rica reports first contact from kidnappers

SAN JOSE (AFP) — The Costa Rican government Friday said the kidnappers of two European women had made a first contact seeking negotiations for their release.

The government concluded that a telephone call late Thursday to a Roman Catholic priest, Eduardo Bolanos, by a man who identified himself as a member of the Viviana Gallardo commando "deserves credibility," Information Minister Alejandro Soto said at a news conference.

"Now begins a very difficult situation, the beginning of negotiation" once the terms of dialogue are set, he said, reading a government statement.

"Once again, (the government) asks them immediately begin negotiations through the mediation of Father Eduardo Bolanos to reach a happy ending to this difficult situation," he said.

Mr. Soto stressed that the government's "main interest is to obtain the safe and sound freedom" of the hostages.

German tourist Nicola Fleuchaus, 24, and Swiss national Regula Sigfrid, 50, a tourist guide who lives in Costa Rica, were abducted from a resort hotel late Monday by a heavily armed group.

No trace of them has been found despite an intensive air and ground search by Costa Rican authorities, aided by the Nicaraguan army.

A handwritten note found at the hotel after the abduction said the kidnappers wanted Mr. Bolanos, who lives near the la Lagarto Laguna lodge in northern Costa Rica, and an International Red Cross official to mediate negotiations.

In a televised interview earlier Friday, Mr. Bolanos said he had received a brief phone call from a man who said the kidnappers were ready to negotiate and repeated ransom demands that had been reported by the media. The caller "said nothing" about the condition of the hostages, the priest added.

"He told me to give the message to the government and I did," he said, adding that the man promised to call back within 12 hours with the name of the chosen Red Cross official.

The group has threatened to kill the women if it is pursued by authorities.

In the note found at the hotel claiming responsibility, the kidnappers demanded $1 million, the prison release of the Gallardo commando blamed for a 1993 kidnapping, and social benefits, including an 18 per cent pay hike for government workers.

The letter identifies the kidnappers as the Viviana Gallardo Commando, named after an alleged terrorist killed in jail in 1981.

A second note, apparently sent by the kidnappers to reporters late Thursday, further pressured the government to meet their demands. "We really do not wish to kill in cold blood," it said.

"This is a personal problem with the government."the note threatens terrorist attacks if the kidnappers' demands are unmet and warned the government that any search for them risks

The safety of an American family living in Costa Rica. The U.S. embassy in San Jose warned Americans in the country to take "all normal precautions."

Meanwhile, the editor of the German weekly Costa Rica Aktuel said the parents of Fleuchaus were willing to pay the $1 million ransom.

'U.S. crime is a ticking bomb'

WASHINGTON (R) — Violent crime in the United States is a ticking bomb ready to explode, a commission of crime experts reported Friday.

The Council on Crime in America, contradicting official figures that crime levels are declining, said in its first report that they "remain at historic highs."

"America is a ticking violent crime bomb, and there is little time remaining to prepare for the blast," said the report, which noted the rise in youthful violence.

The bipartisan council is headed by former Democratic U.S. Attorney General Griffin Bell and former Republican national drug czar William Bennett.

At a news conference releasing the document, Mr. Bennett and eight other crime-fighters, including the state attorneys general of Florida and Colorado and the Philadelphia prosecutor, painted a grim picture of U.S. mayhem.

They said official FBI statistics on crime, those crimes reported to police, were only the tips of the iceberg.

The report said the crime rate — based on surveys of victims and not just crimes reported to the police — show violent crime — including murder, rape, assault and burglary — was 5.6 times higher than those reported.

Based on victims' reports, there were nearly 11 million violent crimes in 1993 compared to the roughly two million officially reported.

Official crime rates have been dropping in the 1990s but the decrease has been concentrated in big crime-prone cities like New York and Houston, the report said.

The experts estimated that the risk of being a victim of violent crime in the United States is greater than being injured in a car accident — 51.5 per 1,000 adults a year compared to 22 per 1000.

The council, financed by private foundations to hammer home the extent of crime in the United States, warned that those committing crimes are getting younger. Philadelphia prosecutor Lynne Abraham told of one 13-year-old boy suspected of two or three killings.

The fastest growing type of murder in the United States is by youth gangs, the report said.

The experts disputed a perception that blacks committed the majority of violent crimes against whites, saying most violence did not cross the race barrier.

The report said the commonly-held view that most murders were committed against people who know each other was no longer so, saying most murders were now among strangers.

Teenager charged for killing school superintendent

LONDON (AFP) — A 15-year-old was charged in the murder of a London school headmaster whose killing sparked widespread outrage in Britain, police here said Friday. The teenager, who was not identified, allegedly stabbed to death last month Philip Lawrence, 48, as he tried to protect a student being attacked in front of the Catholic school by a gang armed with baseball bats and a knife. The suspect, from Camden, north of London, is also charged with hitting and injuring the student. He was arrested Thursday and was ordered held in jail after appearing before a magistrate Friday. He is to appear in juvenile court next Tuesday.

Arsonist boiled to death

MANILA (AFP) — An arsonist was accidentally boiled to death when he hid in a drum of water to protect himself from a fire he started, a Philippine newspaper reported here Saturday. The Philippine Star said the arsonist, Renato Salazar, a trucking firm employee, entered his company's kitchen Friday and reportedly opened two gas tanks. He then hid inside the water-filled drum before tossing a lighted match at the tanks. The blaze destroyed the two-storey building. Firefighters found Salazar's body in the drum where he apparently sought refuge from the blaze. The newspaper said Salazar had been refused a pay hike and was angry at his employer.

Nine-year-old wins lawsuit against neighbour

BEIJING (AFP) — A nine-year-old girl in the eastern Chinese city of Hangzhou has won a lawsuit against a neighbour who she said damaged her reputation, the official Xinhua news agency reported Friday. Mao Xingyi, a third-grade student in a Hangzhou primary school said her neighbour, a 31-year-old cadre who was not named, stopped her at the school gate on June 21, 1994, grabbed her umbrella, and called her a thief, saying she had stolen a wallet in public. Mao said she fell ill the next day and was afraid to go to school. As a result of that, her school performance declined, her lawyer argued. Mao's lawyer filed an appeal with the court, asking that the neighbour apologise and pay her 10,000 yuan in compensation for her psychological suffering, the agency reported. An investigation showed the two live in the same building, and that their two families had previously quarrelled because one of them had built a balcony.

Retired vicar arrested for Internet porn

EASTBOURNE, England (AFP) — A retired vicar was arrested when police investigating a child pornography ring on the Internet, swooped on his seaside home in this southern English town, police said. The 68-year-old clergyman was among three people detained when detectives raided their homes here Thursday and seized more than 150 pictures of children along with computer equipment. A police spokesman said they believed the men were part of a much larger Internet porn operation and there were many more inquiries to be made. "One of the men arrested was a retired clergyman, another is a disabled 44-year-old and the third is aged 50 years. The disabled man appeared to be the brains behind the computer system," said the spokesman. The men were later released on police bail.

Security Council fails to endorse call for troops in Burundi

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The U.N. Security Council Friday condemned the killings in Burundi but failed to endorse a call from U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali for standby troops to avert an ethnic bloodbath.

In a non-binding statement, the Security Council also urged that travel restrictions be imposed against extremists from among both the Hutu and Tutsi communities held responsible for inter-ethnic killings in the central African country.

The council said it shared Mr. Ghali's "deep concern at the situation in Burundi which has been characterised by daily killings, massacres, torture and arbitrary detention.

"It condemns in the strongest terms those persons responsible for such actions, which must cease immediately. It encourages again all states to take the measures deemed necessary to prevent such persons from travelling abroad and receiving any kind of support."

The U.N. statement was issued after Burundian Foreign Minister Venerand Bakevyumusaya rejected Mr. Ghali's call for troops to be based in Zaire which could rapidly intervene in Burundi.

The Organisation of African Unity has also failed to voice support for Mr. Ghali's proposal, first put forward in August 1994, noting in a statement Friday that the ball was in the Security Council's court.

Mr. Ghali last week again floated the idea of standby troops, and of guards to protect humanitarian workers inside Burundi.

The Security Council said it "notes" Mr. Ghali's proposals which would be discussed next week.

Western diplomats said that the idea of standby troops appeared a non-starter, but that the humanitarian guards proposal would be examined in more detail next week.

U.S. mission spokesman James Rubin said that Washington was "generally favourable" to the idea of guarding relief workers.

But deploying a large international force in Zaire "raises a lot of questions which do not have satisfactory answers at this time."

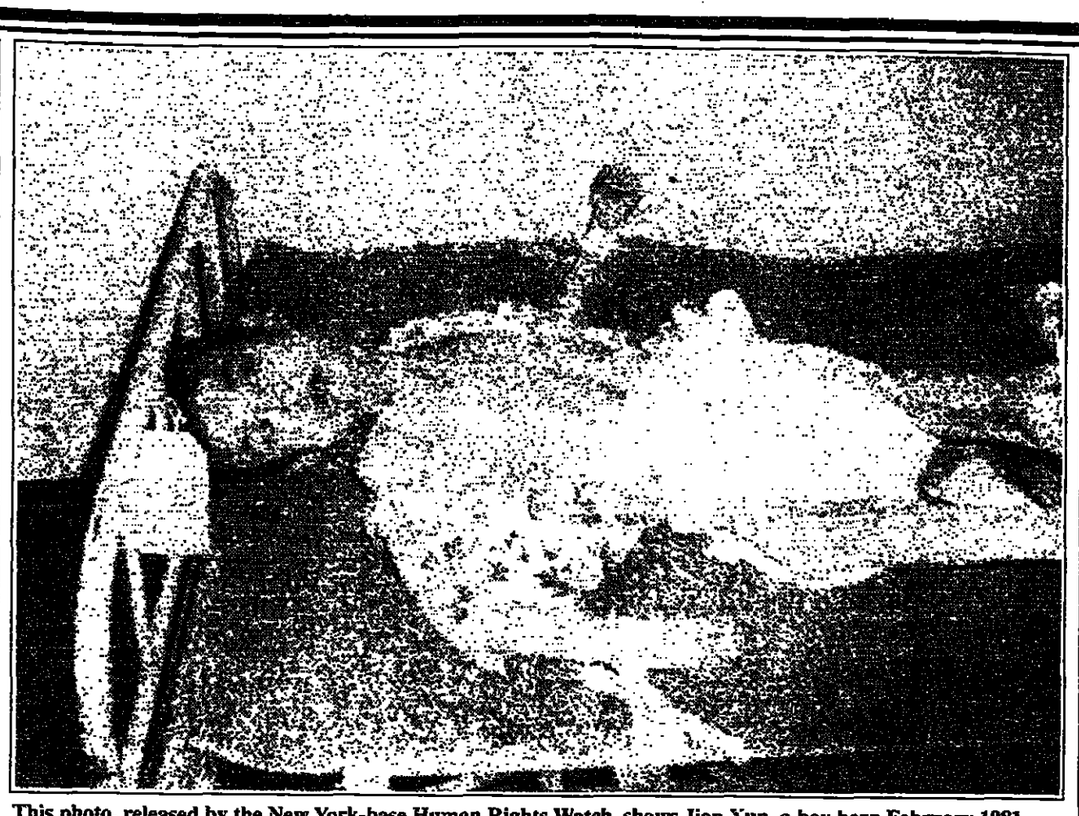
The Security Council has been cool to the idea of sending troops because of the complex nature of the problem and the difficulty in assembling an international force amid reservations in the region.

There are also fears that troops on the border with Burundi might actually provoke further tensions inside the country.

The secretary-general warned last week that the international community must act now to prevent "ethnic violence on a massive scale" in Burundi.

Western diplomats said they favour a "two-step approach," consisting of Friday's statement underscoring Security Council concern about the Burundi situation, then further consultations next week on possible concrete action once more information from Bujumbura was available.

The Security Council is notably waiting to hear back from U.N. High Commissioner Sadako Ogata, who travels to Burundi Sunday, and from special representative Marc Faguy who has been there since Saturday.



This photo, released by the New York-base Human Rights Watch, shows Jian Xun, a boy born February 1981, who was admitted to the Shanghai orphanage on Feb. 24, 1988 and died on July 17, 1992 (AFP photo)

China slams human rights report on orphan deaths

BEIJING (AFP) — China rejected Friday an as-yet unpublished report alleging that thousands of children die every year from starvation and medical neglect in state orphanages, and invited foreign journalists to tour the main facility targeted by the document.

"This report is totally groundless and is aimed at damaging the international image of China," a foreign ministry spokesman said.

"This is a futile effort," he added.

The report, compiled by the New York-based Human Rights Watch/Asia, draws heavily on evidence provided by Zhang Shuyun, who worked as a doctor at one of China's largest orphanages, the Shanghai Children's Welfare Institute, from 1988-93.

Dr. Zhang fled China in March 1995.

In a highly unusual move, the Chinese foreign ministry, in conjunction with the Shanghai Civil Affairs Bureau. Friday issued an invitation to foreign journalists in China to visit the Shanghai orphanage Monday.

The tour, apparently aimed at refuting the charges listed in the report, which also includes alleged photographs of dead and emaciated children in the institute. will feature "a seminar" given by the relevant Chinese officials, the invitation said.

The Shanghai Civil Affairs Bureau also denounced the report's allegations.

"It is not true. What (Zhang) said did not accord with the facts," a bureau spokesman said Friday. "It is true that some children died over the past year but not everything she said was factual."

The spokesman said the authorities were considering how to deal with Dr. Zhang, who had "twisted facts" and had "her own reasons" for making the allegations.

Given that Dr. Zhang is now abroad, it was unclear what steps the Chinese authorities might take.

The foreign ministry spokesman in Beijing stressed that "the Chinese government and social organisations have made tremendous efforts to protect children's rights and have registered achievements known to the world."

The report describes cases of what it alleges to be deliberate starvation and medical neglect. which occurred with the "tacit approval" of senior political leaders.

The report says the majority of children admitted to the Shanghai institute during the late 1980s and early 1990s died within one year of admission.

On a national level, the report said evidence showed that a newly admitted orphan had less than a one-in-two chance of surviving the first year in a welfare institution in China.

Human Rights Watch cited medical records showing that in Dr. Zhang's full year at the orphanage, most deaths were recorded as resulting from "congenital maldevelopment of the brain."

"In almost all cases, however, this diagnosis was made without any apparent medical justification, and sometimes in the face of clear evidence that a child had suffered from no mental disability," the report said.

By 1992, "third-degree malnutrition" became the most commonly-recorded cause of orphans' deaths.

The report said records of the children's weight and general health at time of admittance "clearly indicated that the process of starvation usually began only after their arrival at the orphanage, and was left intentionally untreated by staff members, who passively observed their gradual deterioration and death."

Princess Diana still keeping options open on divorce

LONDON (AFP) — The Princess of Wales is still "examining the situation" following her mother-in-law the queen's call for an early divorce from estranged husband Prince Charles, a Buckingham Palace spokesman said Friday.

He said Princess Diana had written to the queen on Dec. 21 to formally acknowledge receipt of the letter pressing her and the prince to end their 14-year marriage. She had received the letter the previous day.

Princess Diana's reply was simply intended to acknowledge receipt of the queen's letter and did not indicate her position on the issue. the spokesman said.

Princess Diana's personal solicitor, Anthony Julius. met with the princess earlier Friday and indicated beforehand that she was not yet ready to agree in principle to end her 14-year marriage to Prince Charles, from whom she has been legally separated since December 1992.

In a brief but unusual public statement, Mr. Julius said he was intervening to quash press reports that Diana had already decided during her break on the Caribbean island of Barbuda to agree to an early divorce.

Anthony Julius

"A number of options" were open to her," he said, but he declined to confirm that one of them was, as one newspaper reported, to sit back and force the prince to petition for a divorce.

At the same time, Buckingham Palace said that after Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Charles had made clear — in a pre-Christmas exchange of letters — their wish to see an early divorce, the ball was now in Princess Diana's court.

"It is not true that the princess has agreed to a divorce," Mr. Julius said late Thursday. "There is no decision on that yet. No decision will be made tomorrow and there will be no announcement tomorrow."

The lawyer said his meeting with Princess Diana Friday would be "one of a series... to discuss the options that are open to the princess. There are a number of options, but I am not prepared to talk about them at this stage."

Pathology samples from Colombian crash pilot sent to U.S.

BOGOTA (AFP) — Pathology samples from remains of the captain of the American Airlines jet that crashed last month near Cali, killing 164, were sent to the United States Friday amid conflicting reports they contained alcohol.

Four passengers survived the Dec. 20 crash of the Boeing 757 which slammed into an Andean mountainside just before it was to land in Cali. But the precise cause of the crash has not been finally determined and conflicting reports were swirling about the possibility alcohol might have played a role.

Civil aviation officials said blood and tissue samples from the remains were shipped back to the United States so the airline could confirm results of the tests carried out in Colombia. They did not disclose the results.

Colombia's Director of legal medicine Jose Gregorio Mesa said a forensic expert from his institute travelled with the remains to the United States Friday.

Mr. Mesa underscored that reports from the United States that the Colombian testing had turned up alcohol in the remains of 57-year-old Nicholas Tafuri were not official ones.

An American Airlines statement received by the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) said Colombian forensic tests had turned up alcohol in Tafuri's remains but Mr. Mesa said it was premature to be stating unambiguously that Tafuri may have ingested alcohol before or while flying.

Russian army attacks Chechen fighters

MOSCOW (R) — Russian troops attacked Chechen fighters in the southern hills of the breakaway republic, killing up to 30 of them, Russian news agencies said on Saturday.

Quoting military spokesmen in the Chechen capital Grozny, Interfax news agency said three soldiers were killed and six wounded in Friday's operation near the mountain town of Shatoi.

"A military operation was carried out to clean up the area close to the town of Shatoi, where units and squads of the Russian defence ministry are deployed. In the course of the operation up to 30 fighters were wiped out," the agency said.

There was no independent confirmation of the casualty figure.

Separatist forces loyal to Dzhokhar Dudayev have maintained a strong presence in the mountainous south of the republic since being forced out of Grozny by an army offensive early this year.

ITAR-TASS news agency said another five separatists were killed near Achkhoi-Martan, to the west of Grozny, after they attacked a squad of Russian interior ministry troops.

Interfax said up to 40 rebels had attacked the unit with mortars and grenades under cover of fog. No soldiers died.

Two separatist fighters were killed when troops destroyed an observation post at Bamut, southwest of Grozny, it said.

Fighting in Chechenya has intensified in the past month to levels not seen since a shaky ceasefire was agreed in June.

Rebels held the town of Gudermes, the region's second biggest settlement, for 10 days in December in an effort to disrupt Moscow-run elections.

Minister Takemura not to join new cabinet

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's Finance Minister Masayoshi Takemura said Saturday he would not join a new cabinet after Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama's resignation.

He told reporters he would instead concentrate on issues of his own party, the new party Sakigake.

"I have become negligent in party affairs during my term as a minister," said Mr. Takemura who heads the small centrist group in the ruling coalition.

Mr. Takemura also ruled out early general elections.

Elections for the house of representatives do not need to be held until July 1997, but there has been speculation in the Japanese media that the lower house may be dissolved earlier for a snap election.

Earlier Mr. Takemura reportedly stressed his support for the current tripartite alliance with the Liberal Democratic Party, the biggest and conservative group in the ruling camp, and Mr. Murayama's Social Democratic Party.

But he told a New Year's party in western Japan that "the three parties strongly doubt a political party closely linked to a certain religious group should be eligible for administrative power referring to the New Frontier Party (Shinshinto), the main opposition party.

Mr. Murayama will formally resign Thursday when a three-day extraordinary session of parliament is convened. LDP leader and Trade Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto is widely expected to become the new premier.

Election year make or break for Australia's premier

CANBERRA (R) — After more than half a lifetime in politics, Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating is fighting for political survival in 1996 as he seeks to lead his Labour Party to an historic sixth straight election win.

Mr. Keating's government, expected to announce a March national election within the next seven weeks, has heavily trailed the conservative opposition in opinion polls for almost a year.

And there are no signs of an imminent change in fortunes, pollsters and political analysts said Friday.

"The government can't win this election, the opposition will have to give it to them," veteran election specialist Malcolm Mackerras told Reuters.

Mr. Keating, 51, who was elected to parliament in 1969 and became, at 31, labour's youngest national minister in 1975, has been involved in politics since he was a child and is expected to quit politics if he loses.

For opposition leader John Howard, this election will also be a make-or-break battle.

Mr. Howard led the Liberal Party, the senior partner in the opposition coalition with the National Party, from 1984 until he was dumped in a party-room coup in 1989. He was widely criticised within the coalition after Mr. Keating's predecessor, Bob Hawke, won the 1987 election with an increased majority.

Mr. Howard, who returned as leader a year ago, is holding off announcing policy details until the campaign, hoping to minimise the targets for the government to score political points.

Mr. Keating has recently overtaken his rival in opinion polls as the preferred prime minister but electoral analysts say this is not enough to overcome the opposition's poll lead over labour.

However, Mr. Keating fought back during the last election, in 1993, to confounded the opinion polls and win what was considered an unwinnable election with an increased majority.

Labour, which has pushed its economic achievements over almost 13 years in power, appears set to go to the polls with slowing economic growth and low business confidence.

The government has revised down its growth forecast for the year to June 30 to 3.25 per cent from an original forecast of 3.75 per cent. And it raised inflation and jobless forecasts.

Surveys of business expectations show business projecting falling profits and sales and stagnant employment in the march quarter, coinciding with the election campaign.

Keating must hold an election by mid-May, giving him a deadline of about 90 days in which to announce a May poll, allowing for the minimum 33 day campaign period.

The mechanics of Australia's electoral process and politicians' traditional reluctance to disturb voters for a variety of reasons, including holidays, make March the most likely month, politicians and analysts said.

Australian elections must be held on a Saturday.

February is clogged with state polls and their fallout. April is also considered unlikely, either because the election would interfere with Easter or because a late April poll would allow parliament to sit again before the election.

Holiday weekends in March and the release of economic growth figures on March 20 make March 30 or March 16 the favoured dates. While no nasty surprises are expected in the March 20 data, particularly after the government revised down its growth forecasts, analysts say it would still be a risk to schedule a vote for March 23, so close to the figures.

"I'd say the 30th of March is most likely, and the one two weeks before that (March 16) would be number two," one Labour parliamentarian told Reuters.

Holding off until May would look like a government convinced of defeat holding on to the trappings of office till the last possible moment and would leave Mr. Keating no room to manoeuvre, analysts said. However. some rate May 4 an outside chance.

New turmoil as Italian parties fail to agree on government

ROME (AFP) — Italy's two main political alliances Friday said they had totally failed to agree on how to form the next government, plunging the country into yet more uncertainty as it begins its six-month tenure in the chair of EU institutions.

Romano Prodi, leader of a centre-left coalition said the two sides had disagreed on "fundamental issues," following a meeting Friday with former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, head of the rightist Freedom Alliance.

He said Mr. Berlusconi had reiterated that his alliance would push to topple the government of Prime Minister Lamberto Dini, leaving "no reason to pursue the talks."

Mr. Prodi said that his coalition was not willing to back a motion for a new government or early elections at this time, especially as the country Monday took on the six-month rotating presidency of the European Union.

Mr. Berlusconi, for his part, called Mr. Prodi's position "absurd" and said the deadlock between the two coalitions was reason enough to call for early elections.

Mr. Prodi said earlier, following a meeting with members of the federalist Northern League, that agreement could be reached between his centre-left alliance and the league.

The agreement would be conditional on reforming the constitution to favour a more federal Italy. For the Northern League, such reform is crucial for its support of any new government.

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Tigers' experience for us

SUCH CONFERENCES as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, UNCTAD, which starts in Amman on Tuesday, have become a sort of fixture over the past three decades. They are held at regular intervals at different locations across the globe. Then they bring together experts in different fields who produce voluminous documents that take months to compile, edit and print in many languages. But, unfortunately, most of these documents end up on shelves in government offices, often to gather dust only.

The UNCTAD conference may indeed be very important. But it may not be different from those in which hundreds of delegates come together, labour for days to come up with resolutions, in this case the Amman Declaration, and then do nothing afterwards.

Delegates from Iraq are already demanding that the Amman Declaration address the lifting of sanctions against their country. They might at the end succeed in the inclusion of a paragraph or two that would address their grievances, but who is going to heed their cry? The Iranians might likewise want to include a resolution on the American boycott against Iran. But would that change things on the ground?

Jordan, meanwhile, wants to include an article that would enhance the country's chances to win foreign investment. Aware that most of the foreign investment that pours into the Asian region goes to the so-called tigers of southeast Asia, Jordan wants UNCTAD to resolve that "investment should be directed towards all countries... of the group," as Secretary-General of the Ministry of Trade and Industry Mohammad Smadi has noted. Dr. Smadi might have indicated in his statement that investments should be directed in accordance with regional or U.N. resolutions. But this cannot be the whole fact. The experience of the Asian tigers shows the naked truth. Those who wished to invest their money in Singapore, Thailand, Taiwan, Malaysia, Hong Kong or South Korea did so only based on pure economic reasons. They were hardly interested in political systems, religion, democracy, peace or even human rights. Their main concern was to get maximum returns for their investment with minimum risk, with one of the main factors to attract investors being the availability of cheap but skilled labour.

Our bureaucrats should thus learn from the experience of those nations, which barely have any natural resources of their own. Until and unless the countries of this region learn from the successful experiences of others we cannot possibly go far in achieving our aims.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

THE UNHOLY alliance between Syria and Iran, which has lasted for 15 years, is bound to come to an end soon in view of the imminent peace treaty between Damascus and Tel Aviv, said a writer in **Al Ra'i** daily. The resumption of the Syrian-Israeli peace talks in Washington and Syria's support for the United Arab Emirates in its dispute over the Gulf islands that were occupied by Iran served as a catalyst in accelerating the deterioration in relations between Tehran and Damascus, according to Fahd Al Fanek. During the first Gulf war, Syria received all its needs of oil free from Iran in return for Damascus closing the oil pipeline that used to carry the Iraqi oil through Syria to the Mediterranean Sea; and at the same time, Damascus continued to receive financial aid from the Gulf states under the pretext what it has been protecting them from Iran, said the writer. But the Syrians, at the same time, allowed Lebanon to fall under the rule of the Iranian revolutionary guards and Hizbollah's militias who have been also involved in a conflict with Israel, said the writer. Generally speaking, Syria has for the past years sided with Iran, a non-Arab country, against Iraq, and Arab national interests, said the writer, who predicted that the future of Iranian-Syrian relations is in the balance and pending the outcome of the Washington peace negotiations.

ABDULLAH RADWAN, a writer in **Al Ra'i** daily discussed the ever rising cost of living in Jordan in general and focused on the government's promise to give its employees monthly a JD 10 cost of living allowance. The promised JD 10 raise can do nothing to help the limited-income employees cope with the prices situation at all, he said. Indeed, the JD 10 raise does not make up for the recent hike in the prices of basic commodities, like eggs, cooking oil and coffee; and therefore, it is impossible for this little pay increase to help make ends meet, said the writer.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

By Dr. Fahed Al Fanek

Getting ready for a Palestinian pound

THE JORDAN DINAR (JD) is one of three currencies legally circulating in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, along with the Israeli shekel (IS) and the American dollar (US$). This is obviously not a normal situation, and consequently may not last for long. The Palestinian pound (PP) is coming, sooner or later.

This subject was taken seriously by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the U.S., Japan and the European Union (EU). The only party that is not looking seriously to this eventuality is the one that is bound to be affected the most — Jordan and the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ).

The conversion of the JDs to PPs means that the external indebtedness of Jordan will rise by around $560 million, due for payment in a short period of time, if not immediately, which should call for some cautious measures in order to be ready for that moment.

Fuad Beseiso, head of the Palestinian Monetary Authority (PMA), recently told the press that PNA intends to establish its own currency within two years. This is of course possible, but it needs the Israeli prior approval, in accordance with Article 4 of the Palestinian-Israeli economic agreement, signed in Paris in April 1994.

According to the CBJ officials, their Israeli counterparts assured them that they will receive an advance information of the impending approval at least one year ahead of time. This means that the issuance of PP will not happen suddenly if at all, and that Jordan will not be taken by surprise, but the informally agreed advance warning is too short for getting ready to face the big incident.

The IMF board of directors, who cares about the protection of Jordan's successful adjustment experience, discussed the matter in mid-1995 and laid some ideas on how to go about it. The Japanese representative hinted to a possible injection of a relatively large amount of foreign exchange to CBJ. It is not a coincidence that the new adjustment programme called for the addition of $500 million to the reserves of CBJ during 1996, which may come from Japan, IMF and EU.

One can speculate that, as long as Jordan continues to push forward in the peace with Israel sponsored by the U.S., and countries to carry on with the economic adjustment programme supervised by the IMF, Jordan can depend on the support of the international community in facing the impact of JD withdrawal from the Palestinian territories. But it is neither safe nor acceptable to be solely dependent on the goodwill of others in a crucial matter that may affect the very security of the Jordanian economy.

Nor it is appropriate to rely on the economic logic, which says that it is not in the best interest of the Palestinians to issue a shaky currency by an infant central bank. Economic consideration will not be the decisive factor. PNA will rush to issue the Palestinian currency as soon as such a step becomes politically possible.

The Israeli veto could not be counted on, not only because Jordan may not like to invoke this veto due to national considerations, but also because the Israeli government is very pragmatic. It will not hesitate to give the Palestinians this concession as long as it is not costly to Israel. It may extract a valuable Palestinian concession in return.

The question then, is "what should Jordan do in the few coming years to get ready for the worst case scenario?" The answer is: "A lot."

The U.S. replaces the U.N. as the arbiter in an unruly world

By Richard Reeves

NEW YORK — The dispatching of 60,000 NATO troops to Bosnia under the command of the president of the United States may well be remembered, or cursed, as the triumph or the end of the "New World Order" hailed by another American president when he ordered troops to Kuwait four years ago.

This peaceful invasion of the mess that was once Yugoslavia is a major event in defining the elusive post-cold war, single-superpower role of the United States: By design or accident, the overwhelmingly powerful United States is replacing the pathetically weak United Nations as the court, peacekeeper and punisher of last resort in a very unruly world.

The deployment of the troops, 20,000 of them American, of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in a presidential election year obviously could be the event that makes or breaks President Bill Clinton, but the impact of his orders have implications that go well-beyond whether this president knows what he is doing.

Two related questions should dominate the foreign policy debate of the 1996 elections:

■ Is the United States ready, willing and able to assume the role of guarantor of peace and decency everywhere in the world, the worthy role assigned to the United Nations 50 years ago by the victors of World War II?

■ Why is the United States, a country unthreatened, maintaining (and American taxpayers paying for) a military machine capable of conquering the world at the same time that its people are being told there is no money for the care of the halt, the lame and the young?

The second question of course has more potential resonance in a political season. It is a pocketbook issue.

It is amazing that few voices are being raised about the fact that the United States is still spending more money on defence than all the rest of the world combined. In fact, the voices heard most often are complaining that U.S. military spending levels are too low; what we hear are howls of local pain when bases or defence contractors are closed down or warnings that demobilisation will invite war.

But war with whom? It is astonishing that Pentagon spending is off the table by tacit consent of the president and congressional leaders in their ongoing budget numbers game.

It is surprising, too, that there is so little analysis of where President Clinton is going on foreign policy. Though there seemed to be no overall strategy in the White House, Mr. Clinton has moved (or stumbled) into the vacuum created by the virtual collapse of the U.N.

Is it any wonder that those seeking to be saved from Iraqi invasion and those seeking the end of ethnic and civil wars in Bosnia, Israel or Ireland turn not to the United Nations but to the White House for guarantees of international pressure, sanctions and aid?

The United Nations does many good things, some of them quite well, dealing with refugees or health and labour concerns in places no one much cares about, the ones that don't make it to television. But the organisation itself is in steep decline under the ineffective leadership of Secretary-General Boutros Ghali, who has lost the confidence of what used to be called the First World (the democracies) and the Second World of communism.

Universal Press Syndicate

Getting the refugees home is going to take time and care

By Iain Guest

GENEVA — Early this year the international community will start encouraging more than four million uprooted people to return and resettle in Rwanda and Bosnia. Given that both countries are synonymous with genocide, the question needs to be asked whether this is necessary, safe or wise.

In broad terms, the answer has to be "yes." The essence of ethnic cleansing was violent expulsion. There will be no peace for these damaged countries unless the victims are allowed to return, if not to their original homes then at least to a site of their choice in their country.

At the same time, conditions hardly seem propitious for a mass return. Croatian militias began burning Serbian houses in Bosnia before the ink was dry on the Dayton agreement.

In Rwanda there is such anger about war criminals being at large among Hutu refugees outside the country that returning Hutu are subject to arrest. Here is the stark dilemma of contemporary refugee protection.

On the one hand, the international community must take advantage of political openings like the Dayton agreement and get refugees out of camps and back home. On the other hand, this has to be done without endangering lives. How can both goals be achieved?

Under a 1951 convention, refugees who flee persecution have the right to seek asylum and not be turned away. The international community has made no comparable, legally binding commitment to protect them once they return.

In spite of this, in the last five years at least nine million refugees have gone back to countries that were also once wracked by violence and persecution. These include Burma, Afghanistan, Vietnam, South Africa, Namibia, Cambodia, El Salvador and Mozambique.

The vast majority have returned safely, and there is little to suggest that they have been systematically targetted for persecution after returning. It can also be argued that conditions back home will never seem totally ripe for return, and that opportunities must be created and exploited.

This case is convincingly made in the latest "State of the World's Refugees," just issued by Sadako Ogata, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. As one of the United Nations' most effective agency heads, Ms. Ogata's preference is for practical and, ideally, preventive solutions.

She has urged governments to endorse the "right to remain" and the "right to return." Her agency has assumed the burden of assisting more than five million persons who have been uprooted by war.

The most complete, and in some ways reassuring, example of Ms. Ogata's proactive approach occurred in Cambodia in 1992. After the Paris peace agreement of October 1991, Cambodia, like Rwanda and Bosnia today, was a dark and brooding land of ghosts, graves and land mines.

The U.N. refugee agency grasped the nettle. By starting repatriation on a modest scale, it was ultimately able to provide sufficient reassurance to encourage 360,000 Cambodian refugees to return home from Thailand.

Dayton promises to take this one important step further. Ms. Ogata's agency insisted that an annex on refugees be added to the agreement. Sensibly enough, the first to be resettled when repatriation starts in the spring will be the 1.3 million internally displaced Bosnians, given that they are the most vulnerable. They will be reassured — and hopefully protected — by 60,000 NATO troops and U.N. repatriation monitors.

Yet the Dayton plan makes huge assumptions. So much blood has been shed to establish ethnically purged regions that it will clearly not be possible to rebuild a completely multiethnic state. People will have to leave to make way for returnees and new arrivals. Partners in a mixed marriage who return to a different ethnic area could have a particularly tense homecoming.

Another major worry concerns the nearly 700,000 Yugoslavs who have found shelter in Western Europe. Many are illegal residents or have been given only temporary leave to remain. This means they could be bundled home before it is safe, in order to meet an artificial deadline like elections in Bosnia or a NATO "exit strategy" imposed by the U.S. Congress.

Nor is it clear whether the reconstruction plans currently under discussion for Bosnia will provide a lasting foundation for the safe reintegration of the returning refugees.

Here the precedent of Cambodia is discouraging. In spite of a $3 billion effort by the United Nations, and internationally supervised elections, some of those who returned home have been displaced by fighting; others have failed to turn their repatriation grant into a lasting investment; more have probably stepped on land mines in 1995 than in 1992. But all this, sadly, is also the fate of Cambodians who never left.

if this casts a shadow over the Bosnian resettlement, it screams out a warning in distant Rwanda, which is viewed with nothing like the same urgency in Western capitals. Some 1.2 million Hutu refugees in Zaire have been given until the end of the year to return home. The deadline is being quietly revised, but the threat of a massive push-back from Zaire early this year remains real.

This reveals an international community that is still groping, as it struggles to move from peacekeeping to reconstruction. The establishment of two war crimes tribunals on Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia is an important start becasue it recognises the aching need for justice in these countries where law was abandoned. It is to be hoped that the tribunals will lay the basis for a permanent criminal court.

It is now time to apply the same thinking to repatriation. Reintegration of refugees has been built into several recent peace plans — Namibia, Cambodia, Mozambique, and now Bosnia — and this is welcome. But there needs to be more consistency and clarity about the safeguards. Those who refuse to return home, regardless of incentives, must be offered resettlement elsewhere in the region — even at the risk of encouraging some to resist return.

There will be no large-scale return of Hutu refugees to Rwanda in its present state; yet donors are unlikely to make a generous commitment to reconstruction unless they see refugees returning home. The best way to break this circle is to concentrate on essentials inside Rwanda, starting with reform of the justice system and punishment of war criminals.

Outside the country, in the camps, U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees must be given room to create the initiatives that have become its hallmark under Ms. Ogata. This might start the process of returns on a manageable scale.

Forcing the pace would do irreparable damage to the refugee agency's core mandate — to defend asylum. Even worse, it could trigger a recurrence of the madness in Rwanda. That is even a remote possibility shows that we are still very close to the edge, for all the achievements of recent years.

The writer is a senior fellow at the Washington-based Refugee Policy Group, was spokesman for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees in 1992 in Cambodia. This comment is reprinted from The Washington Post.

Of garbage, cartels, and cheating

By Dr. Yusuf Mansur

OUR TITLE suggestrs that a relationship exists between garbage, cartels, and cheating. The three are related in that they are market distortions, hindrances to the processes of production and trade. Most significantly, they bear heavily on the performance of the Jordanian economy.

■ Pollution is considered to be a negative externality, that is a negative side effect of consumption and production. Downtown Amman and the city of Zarqa are not good for your lungs or longevity; they are two of the most air-polluted areas in Jordan. Automobiles have the dubious honour of being the biggest polluters in Jordan; one reason being their prices. Cars are so expensive that the majority of people cannot afford to buy new, efficient designs (a more efficient public transportation system would reduce the need for passenger cars considerably and with that the pollution rate). In order to combat pollution, large-scale educational campaign about the dangers of accumulating waste at rates beyond nature's capacity to absorb it need to be carried out. Recycling efforts must be encouraged in spite of their cost. Other efforts such as replacing plastic bags with biodegradable plastic or paper bags, should be encouraged. These plastic bags have become an eye-sore even in the desert. A plastic bag requires more than one hundred years to disintegrate. Have you ever seen a sheep that has swallowed one of these bags which you or I may have discarded? It chokes on it like a child would on a balloon and suffocates as its wind pipe becomes blocked. Also, these bags do not go away when the land is tilled, they simply suffocate the soil.

■ Cartels, monopolies and non-competitive behaviour are plaguing all Jordanian markets. The coffee cartel, where a group of merchants collectively decide their output and price, is one example of this market-distorting behaviour. To raise prices they lower the quantity offered in the market. For the cartel to be successful the product must be a necessity, have very few substitutes, and it must be able to control a large share of the market. Also, there must be a leader within the cartel that can punish the offenders (those who may sell at prices below the price of the cartel). I believe that all these conditions do exist for the present coffee cartel and without a fair competition law, coffee drinkers are likely to be gouged further by the cartel. The present boycott will be successful only if supported by all coffee drinkers, especially the institutional ones.

■ Information asymmetries are also a great source of distortion in the market. Lack of information to the seller or the buyer may decrease the business activity or increase the wrong activity in the market. In Jordan we still do not require that the seller specify the contents of the product on its packaging, which allows sellers to cheat and provides grounds for unfair competition. How? The seller knows that efficiency is not the only way to generate profits. An easy way to make profits is through the use of cheap, or even defunct, expired components. As long as the consumer remains uninformed, an unethical seller may be able to compete with another who doesn't cheat for the consumer's business and may drive the honest merchant out of the market.

Cheating benefits the producer when the consumer is unaware and harms society as a whole, allowing good businesses to fail and bad ones to flourish.

However, we must encourage honesty by increasing consumers' awareness of the contents of what they consume if we desire to improve Jordanian product quality and standards. This also applies if we are serious about competing with the world or even other countries in the region. For example, let's make it a requirement that shampoos made in Jordan disclose their contents. Otherwise, how one can know that his/her shampoo isn't really dish-washing detergent in a fancy shampoo package.

■ Government interference in the market is a great source of market distortion. Price ceilings, licensing, quantity restrictions, production of private goods and competition with the private sector are all activities that are not really the business of the government. However, the interference of the government, though a second best, is necessary in cases of pollution, information asymmetry, and monopoly power. A strong set of environmental controls that work, a competition law, and a consumer protection law are badly needed. Let's not wait too long.

LETTERS

Democratic practices

To the Editor:

A GLANCE at the results of the second general conference of the Jordanian Democratic Popular Unity Party gives a strong impression of the atmosphere of respect and appreciation for democratic practices among the party members.

The party congress has also helped to further increase the respect of the former first party Secretary-General Azmi Al Khawaja who has been elevated to the post of party chairman. This appreciation goes also to Mr. Khawaja's collegues and the party veterans. This honouring of the party members reflects most positively on the party's image among all political forces in the country.

Waleed Sa'eed

Sarajevo abductions pose dilemma for NATO

By Nicholas Doughty
Reuter

SARAJEVO — After almost two weeks of success in Bosnia, NATO faces a dilemma that could cause the alliance-led peace force real trouble for the first time.

On Tuesday, the Bosnian government accused Serbs of abducting 16 civilians in the past week as they travelled throught Serb-held areas and protested to the NATO-led peace force about its lack of action.

NATO said it had not come to Bosnia as a police force, but only to implement the military aspects of the peace agreement by separating the armed forces and overseeing the transfer of territory.

Now, the heavily armed alliance force faces a choice about the scope and nature of its mission.

Doing nothing could undermine the tough image which NATO has projected successfully so far and undermine the trust of people who believed they could now travel freely around the country, as provided for under the terms of the peace agreement.

It would bring back memories of the U.N. peacekeeping mission, which lost the trust of people it vowed to protect.

But investigating the abductions and taking action would further alienate the resentful Bosnian Serbs at a time when NATO is trying to show that it is even-handed in implementing the peace deal.

Worse, a decision to get involved in wider policing would impose extra tasks on the NATO troops — precisely the sort of risk the alliance has been trying to avoid.

"When we started planning for this, all of the allies insisted that the mandate for the force should be clearly and narrowly defined," said one NATO official.

"We wanted at all costs to avoid the sort of "mission creep" you saw in Somalia, when people got loaded with tasks for which they were not prepared. The result was disastrous."

Under the terms of the Bosnian peace agreement signed last month in Paris, freedom of movement between areas is supposed to be guaranteed by the parties and their civil authorities.

In addition, international coordinator Carl Bildt is responsible for the civil reconstruction and for non-military issues. An international police force of some 1,500 officers is due to support his efforts, but no date has been set for their arrival.

Part of the problem, military officials and diplomats say, is that while NATO has forged ahead with deploying the Implementation Force (IFOR), the civilian planning and structure has lagged, leaving something of a vacuum.

But the peace agreement is also unclear about NATO's precise role. It has the responsibility for military aspects of the agreement but can, if the resources are available, "observe and prevent interference with the movement of civilian populations."

So far, NATO has made very clear it has neither the will nor the number of troops needed to make sure such acts do not happen. Only about half of the 60,000-strong force is so far in place.

The existing civilian authorities do not trust each other after more than three years of war and division. Many people have guns and emotions are still high. In Serb-held areas, including those in Sarajevo, there are still frequent checkpoints.

While NATO's mandate is supposed to be limited, alliance forces have nevertheless raised people's expectations by pledging to provide security and to restore people's confidence.

"You can't have someone advocating freedom of movement and then not taking responsibility for ensuring that in fact it does exist." said Bosnian foreign minister Mohamed Sacirbey.

"What happens is that you invite innocent, trusting civilians to believe in the commitments and promises that are made... This is something IFOR should be in a position to stop."

NATO commander U.S. Admiral Leighton Smith told Bosnian Serb television in an interview on Tuesday that he was still committed to spreading security and reassurance throughout the country.

"But we have to ask ourselves a realistic question. Can we be expected to prevent every lawless act that might happen in any other country in the world? I believe it is completely unreasonable for anyone to expect IFOR to be able to make this a crime-free country."

Armenia's dangerous nuclear gamble

By John Torday

THE ARMENIAN government announced recently that it would restart the nuclear plant at Metsamor, 30 kilometres from the capital, Yerevan. Within this radius there are an estimated 2,165,000 people, over half the country's population. The decision to go ahead is a desperate gamble in which the government may be damned if it does and damned if it doesn't. If the current warm-up trials are successful, the Metsamor reactor could supply up to 30 per cent of the country's energy needs, effectively doubling the electricity supply from an average of two hours to four hours per day. This would both fulfil an election promise and provide some respite from the seventh cold and dark winter which Armenians have endured since the energy crisis began.

Though undamaged, the reactors were shut down in March 1989 after an earthquake struck the preceding December, killing 26,000 people. The tragedy left most Armenians unnerved and strong public opposition to Metsamor was voiced over the threat of nuclear disaster if another tremor occurred. But worse was to come when energy shortages sharply increased during the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. Neighbouring Azerbaijan imposed a blockade, bringing to a halt the rail traffic which had supplied Armenia with 85 per cent of its oil. Immediately prices soared ten-fold, and the already ruptured economy slumped further. Today, it is clearly understood that the economy cannot develop until the energy supply is assured and, given the regional turmoil of recent years, nuclear power is evidently tempting. It is independent and it is affordable, but is it safe?

The reactor in question, Unit 2, which began operating in May 1980, is a first generation VVER-440, a type of pressurised water reactor. Like others in its class in the former Soviet Union, the 440 has a number of serious design shortcomings. Chief among them are the grossly undersized emergency core-cooling system and the absence of a protective shield around the reactor. And there is much more. To its credit, which may not be saving too much, the 440 has a low power density which makes it less vulnerable to operational upsets. And as a reactor class, it has never suffered a core-damaging accident in over 300 "reactor years" of operation. Also, Armenia now has a fledgling regulatory body, Armgostomnadzor, which since March 1994 has received financial and technical assistance for its restoration work from Russia.

Spectre of another Chernobyl

In a recent report commissioned by the U.S. Department of Energy, however, it was claimed that reactors operating in the successor states of the Soviet Union pose a significant safety risk. It stated that as a class "these reactors continue to experience serious incidents, raising the spectre of another incident akin to Chernobyl." With specific reference to Metsamor 2, it commented that "in the event of a serious accident the reactor's lack of containment and proximity to Yerevan could wreak havoc with the lives of millions." The IAEA told MEI that whilst it understood Armenia's energy dilemma it was nevertheless unequivocal that if it were in the West. "Metsamor would not be granted a license to operate. It is totally unprecedented to put a reactor back on stream after seven years in operation."

The G-7 countries have also given Armgostomnadzor modest financial support but they have always refused Armenia's request for more substantial assistance. Their policy towards nuclear power in the old USSR is broadly to shut down the industry wherever possible. Via the Nuclear Safety Account administered by the EBRD, the G-7 has earmarked billions of dollars to clean up and wind down the nuclear industry, but this is no simple task. Dependency on nuclear power varies enormously, from Kazakhstan will less than 1 per cent to Lithuania with over 70 per cent and there are many other considerations, either technical or political. The G-7 would like to see the development of the huge oil and gas reserves that the region holds. They argue that this will provide both safer energy, as well as hard currency and therefore the means to pay some of its own clean-up bills, and, from a G-7 standpoint, far better investment opportunities for its member states. In an ideal world, everyone's a winner.

In the short term, Armenia's gamble may pay off but the safety risks will increase with time and the country must address the issue of renewable or alternative energy sources and become more energy efficient. The consumption of electricity per unit of economic consumption is more than twice as high as that in OECD Europe.

Sooner still, Armenia will have to address the concerns of its neighbours. The borders with Iran and Turkey lie close to Metsamor and the Chernobyl disaster showed that it was neighbouring Belarus more than, the Ukraine itself, which bore the brunt of contamination. In fact, in this regard all Armenia's neighbours are close, including Azerbaijan with its energy bonanza. It has an estimated 68 billion tonnes of oil, scarcely a barrel of which is likely to reach Armenia in the near future.

Middle East International

It's official: Stress can damage your health

First it was said to cause heart attacks. Now it's cancer. **Liz Hunt** looks at the making of a modern disease

THE LINK between breast cancer and stress reported last month by a team of British doctors and psychologists has significance beyond its clinical conclusion. Previous studies have hinted that major traumas such as bereavement, redundancy or divorce, are associated with the disease but the latest evidence, published in the British Medical Journal today, is the most compelling to date.

This study obliges us to place stress at the core of mainstream medicine, as a cause of ill-health. And it begs the question that if stress really does cause disease, what can doctors do about it?

Doctors do not like stress because it is difficult to treat. They prefer magic-bullet medicine, where a drug or operation will cure the disease or alleviate the symptoms. This has been a barrier for more than 50 years to their acceptance of stress as a potential trigger for a range of illnesses. Their patients, however, have recognised stress and its associated risks more readily.

Everyone has felt "stressed out" at sometime or other; it was the classic eighties' disease. And when people are under stress they know, almost intuitively, that they are more vulnerable to coughs, colds, and other infections.

This may sound like common sense, but it is only with scientific evaluation that stress will be taken seriously. Cary Cooper, professor of organisational psychology at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, says: "Studies like the BMJ study can only help. What we have needed is a scientific approach to evaluating stress and, until recently, very few doctors and psychologists have worked together on this."

An Austrian physiologist, Hans Selye, working in Montreal in the thirties, is widely regarded as the father of modern stress research. He noted that adverse stress — physical or emotional stimuli including internal conflicts, significant life events or physical violence — were risk factors for a range of illnesses in certain patients. Dr. Selye hypothesised in medical journals and lectures that these forms of stress disturbed the production of certain vital hormones in the body, resulting in pathological changes to some tissues.

His work attracted some attention from fellow doctors but it was not until the changes in working practice brought about by the World War II that stress became more widely recognised as a subject worthy of research. Long hours and extra night shifts in munitions factories and the aircraft industry took their toll on people's health, reflected in absenteeism and behavioural changes such as increased drinking and smoking.

In the fifties and sixties, the rise in heart disease among men was identified and since they then made up the bulk of the workforce, it was suggested that stress — possibly related to new technologies in the office and modernisation of manufacturing industries — might be a contributory factor. "I was a gradual dawning that something was going on here and that stress could play a part," Professor Cooper says.

The real springboard for the emergence of stress as a modern disease was the work of two cardiologists in the late sixties in San Francisco.

Dr. Meyer Friedman and Dr. Ray Rosenman showed a direct relationship between what they termed "type A" behaviour (ambition, aggressiveness, competitiveness, hostility, restlessness etc) and heart disease. Their eight-year study of more than 3,000 men in California concluded that those who showed type A behaviour ran twice the normal risk of developing coronary heart disease. This was comparable to the risks associated with smoking and drinking.

Their study remains controversial, since several attempts to confirm the findings have failed to do so. However, it remains a landmark in stress research, and funding for further work by the growing number of interested psychologists and scientists was forthcoming as a result.

They set out to discover if stress played a role in the development of other diseases. They had their answer when, in the seventies, scientists at Ohio State University showed that the immune system of animals subjected to stress was compromised, and that production of white blood cells, the T-cells, which fight disease, fell.

Since then a variety of studies — some good, some dubious — have linked stress to a series of major and minor illness: cancer, mouth ulcers, infertility, and post-viral fatigue syndrome. Dr. Selye's hypothesis is now the accepted view: that when coping with stress the body responds by increased production of certain hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol, which affect heart rate, blood pressure and metabolism. However, at a certain level and under continued exposure to stress, these physiological changes affect a person's ability to cope, and possibly cause damage to vital organs. In some susceptible individuals, this may trigger disease.

Dr. Tony David, a medical psychologist at the Institute of Psychiatry in London and one of the researchers involved in the new BMJ study, has postulated that treatments which directly affect the immune system, protecting it from the effects of stress, are a therapeutic option in stress-related illness. But this is many years away; hormonal treatments are another possibility, but again too little is known about their role in disease development.

Preventive action against the bad effects of stress is, then, largely up to the individual, by learning how to reduce or manage their stress levels. GPs can help by referring patients to counsellors or therapists, but those who do are the exception rather than the rule.

Alternatively, Professor Cooper sees a growing role for employers in reducing stress. Changes in the workplace throughout the eighties and nineties have disrupted the lives of millions. The job for life has disappeared, replaced by insecurity and short-term contracts. In the short-term at least, occupational stress will be a growing problem, reflected in poor health and absenteeism. By reducing stress levels at work or helping people cope through access to counselling, employers will be getting more out of their employees while enabling them to manage stressful events outside work more effectively. The way forward may be through the workplace rather than the surgery.

The Independent

Vietnam hesitates at on-ramp to the information superhighway

By Kathy Wilhelm
The Associated Press

HANOI, Vietnam — When Vietnamese dissident Ha Si Phu was arrested recently, the local media was silent and the international press corps carried only brief reports about the little-known essayist.

But Internet discussion groups spread the news around the world, along with the calls for political reform that led to his imprisonment and a heated debate on the merits of his case as well as one-party communist rule.

"Poverty and isolation over the last 20 years was caused by the Vietnamese communists," read one message posted from an overseas Vietnamese. Another compared Ha Si Phu to South African President Nelson Mandela, formerly jailed for opposing his nation's regime.

Small wonder that Vietnam, which is investing heavily in a modern communications system, has suddenly taken its foot off the accelerator while climbing the ramp to the global information superhighway.

Equipment to give Vietnam its first full, commercial Internet link will be ready this month. But no one can say when service will begin. The government is still drafting regulations on what Internet links will be allowed and by whom.

"When we start to open our door, we find that fresh air and dust come in," said Pham Dao, director of the state-run Vietnam Datacommunications Co., which is establishing the Internet link. "We would like to keep the fresh air and prevent the dust."

Different officials have given conflicting accounts of how restricted Internet services will be, creating apprehension among international agencies that are pushing Vietnam to modernise.

"We want to make sure that services are available and can be used as widely as possible and that an element of competition exists," said Jordan Ryan, deputy resident representative for the United Nations Development Programme.

But when it comes to other forms of information, the government seeks a high degree of control:

— It selectively monitors telephone calls and fax transmissions.

— Permission is needed to install a television satellite dish.

— Anonymous checkers scan the relatively few foreign magazines and newspapers that enter the country, routinely tearing out articles critical of government policy.

— Someone even recently took the trouble to ink over strategic body parts in a Naomi Campbell photo spread in Paris Match magazine.

The traditional media are hard to control, however. Customs seizes offensive books coming into the country but they pop up at street stalls in photo-copied knockoff editions. Pornographic videos are widely rented despite frequent police raids on video shops.

The Internet, with its instantaneous transmission of countless pieces of data, far outstrips the capabilities of even the most diligent contingent of manual inspectors.

Mr. Dao said his company will install a "firewall," a software programme that can screen out transmissions from specified senders. In Vietnam's case, these likely would be overseas Vietnamese groups that oppose communism or champion jailed Buddhists and dissidents. Special software can search for certain words to key in on.

But experts say it would be impossible to keep out all controversial material — the Internet is simply too large.

Mr. Dao has caused the most concern by proposing that Vietnam Datacommunications be designated the nation's sole gateway to the Internet, giving it the authority to licence service providers and potentially limit use through high prices.

Mr. Dao said his concern is security, rather than commercial monopoly.

"Like in your house, you have only one door, so you can protect your home," he explained.

Mr. Dao said he wants to regulate but not shut down the country's half-dozen existing providers of Internet E-mail service.

The largest, Netnam, began operating a year ago and has more than 400 subscribers, including foreign aid groups, U.N. organisations and a few Vietnamese professionals. It operates with 12 phone lines and a small staff of technicians and student volunteers at the government Institute of Information Technology.

Netnam and the other existing services do not have full Internet links. Netnam subscribers send E-mail to the institute and it links up four times a day with the Australian national university, which serves as its gateway to the global Internet.

Many subscribers are fiercely loyal — they like the more than 30 local bulletin boards and electronic libraries that Netnam operates. One bulletin board is solely to exchange Vietnam development news. Another focuses on AIDS.

Nguyen Ngoc Canh of the General Directorate of Posts and Telecommunications, which sets communications policy, said competing domestic services likely will be allowed as long Vietnam Datacommunications monitors a single outside link.

Religion in Albania makes a comeback

By Roland Prinz
The Associated Press

TIRANA, Albania — Stalinist dictator Enver Hoxha outlawed religion in Albania in 1967. The ban is gone now, with the fall of the communist regime, but controversy over religion has hardly stopped.

Dozens of religious groups now hold services, proselytise and compete for the 3 million souls of Europe's poorhouse.

Hundreds of foreign evangelists have flocked in. But they are running into bureaucratic restraints to churches without a traditional base in Albania and they face strong opposition from leaders of the nation's long dominant religion, Islam.

In pre-Hoxha Albania, the population was officially 70 per cent Muslim, 20 per cent Roman Catholic and 10 per cent Orthodox.

Missionary John Quanrud, who has struggled for months to build an Evangelical Protestant church in downtown Tirana, said Albania officials often see freedom of religion only as freedom for those pre-World War II churches.

"We want a level playing field," said Mr. Quanrud, whose mission is related to university presbyterian church in Seattle. "We're asking that there be fairness, openness.

The site for Mr. Quanrud's church has been purchased and a blueprint of the three-story building approved.

But an Albanian Muslim neighbour has delayed things by objecting that the church would be too high. And comments from officials also reveal opposition.

"From a legal point of view, they have the right to build the church. From a moral point of view, not," said Barthyl Fico, a government official overseeing church activity.

Hafiz Sabri Koci, the leader of Albania's Islamic community, also opposes plans for the church.

"We consider this a provocation. In a neighbourhood where everybody is Muslim or Catholic, they have no right," he said.

The three long-time religious branches encounter no such problems.

In Shkodra, the largest town in northern Albania and historic centre of the nation's. Catholicism, the Vatican has lovingly restored the cathedral — which was used as a sports hall in communist times.

The Catholic church recently obtained a large chunk of real estate outside Tirana, the capital, to build a religious and community centre. Mother Teresa, an ethnic Albanian by birth, has opened a mission in Tirana.

Signs of Islam are even more ubiquitous.

Hundreds of foreign-financed mosques have sprung up since the ruling democratic party won power in 1992. President Sali Berisha also took Albania into the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, where it is the only European member state.

There is a Turkish college in Tirana. Foreigners are running some 20 Islamic societies in Albania, mainly in humanitarian activities.

Arab businessmen have establishned companies and opened restaurants, and Kuwaiti investors are building a luxury hotel in Tirana, the capital's second Arab-financed hotel.

Mr. Koci, the Islamic community leader, asserts the dominance of the Muslim faith. Referring to American Evangelicals, he says bluntly: "We don't want these sects."

But not all Albanians feel that way. Two-thirds of the population is too young to remember the practice of religion at all before 1990.

Many also argue that Albania — with a unique language, culture and wall of mountains that always kept it isolated — traditionally espoused no outside faith with real enthusiasm. Several of the new mosques now stand unused.

Enthusiasm is not lacking at David Hartmann's Sunday service in a theatre at Tirana's Arts Academy. On a recent weekend, about 200 people exuberantly sang and clapped in praise of the lord, following English texts on a big screen while a small band played. Mr. Hartmann's Bible readings were translated by an Albanian student.

"This is the most wonderful experience. People are so open here," said Mr. Hartmann, a missionary for the international Protestant assembly church in Springfield, Missouri.

"People are hungry for God," he said. "People worship God. They are excited about hearing the word of God."

Some in the crowd indeed were genuine worshippers. Others clearly appreciated the service more as a destraction from the monotony of everyday life in Europe's most downtrodden capital.

The question of genuine belief is one that plagues many of the 400 or so American and other foreign missionaries — some from as far away as South Korea and Brazil.

"Early on, we found tremendous response," said Art Moore of International Teams, an umbrella for 26 Evangelical groups. "After some time, we found that many people were showing interest because they had ulterior motives — jobs and going to America."

Albanian writer Sabri Godo concurred. "A large number of people through religion try to create a perspective for themselves, so they can send their children to study abroad or do some work for which they'll be paid," he said.

Fariz takes over as new Central Bank governor

AMMAN (J.T.) — Leading Jordanian economist Ziyad Fariz Saturday took over as new Central Bank governor after the government appointed him last week to replace longtime incumbent Mohammad Said Al Nabulsi.

Visitors said scores of well-wishers flocked to his office to congratulate him, sipping the traditional cardamon-flavoured dark coffee and eating sweets.

Dr. Fariz, a planning minister between 1989 and 1994 and a former trade minister, oversaw Jordan's transition towards a market economy

He joined the private sector as head of Jordan's first Export and Finance Bank before the government named him to head the Central Bank.

He holds a doctorate from Britain's Keele University and headed the Central Bank's research department before moving on to the planning ministry in 1980.

Dr. Nabulsi, whose present five-year term began in 1994, has held the post since 1973 with only a break in 1985-1989 when he headed the U.N.'s Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia.

Officials said the bank's deputy governor, Michel Marto, one of the candidates to replace Dr. Nabulsi, decided to stay on.

He tendered his resignation late last month after the cabinet chose Dr. Fariz among a short-list of prospective candidates for the key post.

Dr. Marto, respected in banking circles abroad, has been a key negotiator of Jordan's successive rounds of debt talks with its major Western creditor nations, the last with the Paris Club in June 1994.

He also led talks with Israel over economic and banking issues after Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel in October 1994.

Bankers expect Dr. Fariz to continue his predecessor's policy of upholding a tight monetary policy, aimed at stabilising the dinar by increasing the attractiveness of dinar-denominated assets to help boost Jordan's foreign reserves.

The prime minister, hosting a dinner in Dr. Nabulsi's honour, praised the unique personal traits of outgoing governor and the successes he accomplished in his service at the helm of the Central Bank.

In a cable he sent to Dr. Nablusi, the prime minister described him as an exemplary intellectual person and a unique administrative leader who gave Jordan a great deal of his efforts, knowledge and experience. The premier expressed hope that Dr. Nabulsi would continue to contribute and provide his experience to the new generation working in the financial and banking sector.

Yemen abolishes official riyal exchange rate

SANAA (R) — Yemen has abolished the official exchange rate for its riyal currency, its planning minister said Saturday.

But the impoverished Arab state, which is applying World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) reforms, will intervene to defend the riyal, deputy prime minister and minister of planning and development Abdul Qader Bagammal told Reuters.

"As of the beginning of this year we do not have an official exchange rate, this is a decision. There will be no official exchange rate. This is a foregone conclusion," he stressed.

Yemen devalued the riyal last March, introducing an official exchange rate of 50 riyals to the U.S. dollar, up from 12, and other reforms which led to unrest.

The free market rate is around 130 riyals.

"We will not have an official rate but at a given point, we will interefere to protect what we consider the real and practical price, but we are not going to announce this price now," said the minister.

"Over the coming 15 months we will have an additional liquidity of $480 million to stablise and defend the currency against fluctuation. This will give the central bank the ability to balance the rate," he added.

Yemen has been hoping to receive between $700 million and $1 billion to finance the second phase of the reform programme, set to be implemented over the next 15 months.

Yemen also plans to lift trade restrictions.

"We are reconsidering the tariff policy. We have several brackets under which custom dues vary from five to 220 per cent. Now this will become five brackets ranging from five to 70 per cent," Mr. Bagammal said.

He said that under the first phase of the reform plan which started in April, inflation dropped to 45 per cent at end of the fourth quarter of 1995 from 100 per cent.

On Thursday the small, independent oil exporter started gradual price increases of goods and basic services.

The government-owned tobacco and matches company said the price of locally--produced cigarettes had risen to 65 riyal from 60 riyals. Economists said the move was the first in a series under consideration and was likely to include fuel, electricity, water and the gradual reduction of subsidies.

The 1995 budget deficit, forecast at 35 billion riyals, was reduced to 30 billion and in the second phase of reforms," there has to be measures to bring down the budget deficit to three per cent of GDP," Mr. Bagammal said.

In the 1996 budget, expected to be announced later in January, "we will try to cut down deficit ... to 25 billion riyals, to cut down money supply to less than 20 per cent and to bring inflation down to 20 per cent," he added.

He put annual economic growth rate at 0.5 per cent, up from minus 0.5 per cent in 1994 but population growth remained high at 3.7 per cent. He said the deficit in balance of payment account was still "serious" at about $900 million.

Boosting investment top priority for Egypt, new premier says

CAIRO (AFP) — New Prime Minister Kamal Al Ganzuri vowed Saturday that a top priority for his government would be to lift obstacles hampering investment in Egypt as quickly as possible.

"The government promises in the shortest time possible to find a solution to all complaints about the problems facing investors," he told a press conference following the first meeting of the new cabinet.

"We stress the government will strive to attract Egyptian, Arab and foreign investments. It is not normal that in Egypt investments over the past years have been around $300 to $400 million while investment in numerous other countries in the region have doubled or tripled," he said.

He was talking 10 days ahead of renewed negotiations between Egypt and the International Monetary Fund on a programme to restructure the Egyptian economy.

"We have put in place 20 working groups to examine the challenges facing Egypt with legislative, administrative and fiscal problems hindering investment top of the agenda," he said.

A European economic expert told AFP that investment has stagnated for the past two years at round $500 million and the rate of growth of the gross domestic product was around 2.3 per cent.

The new premeir said his goal was to boost the economy to make its growth rate "two or three times higher than the population rate at the beginning of the 21st century."

"The private sector will provide a solution to the problem of employment and will have to absorb 70 to 75 per cent of job-seekers," he stressed.

The main challenges facing Egypt are "increasing production, employment and external trade," he said.

He added the government did not plan to "raise taxes but will try to increase the number of contributions and to fight fiscal fraud."

Paris conference on Palestinian funding to convene Tuesday

PARIS (AFP) — Representatives of some 50 countries and international bodies will gather in Paris next week for a new session of talks on funding for the Palestinian autonomous territories, officials said Friday.

The meeting Tuesday, attended by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and government ministers, will in particular seek pledges to make up the estimated $500 million required by the authority for this year.

The meeting follows a first such gathering in the United States two years ago which agreed on $2 billion package for the period 1995-1998.

The $500 million now needed will cover infrastructure and for a limited period running expenses. Some $200 million have already been committed, and the meeting will seek pledges for the remaining $300 million.

The conference will include a signing ceremony for a tripartite Action Plan between Israel, the Palestinians and donor states, setting out precise commitments, the foreign ministry said.

Participants will in particular update evaluations of the requirements of the new state as autonomy is implemented, said Denis Bauchard, ministry official responsible for the region.

The Palestinian Authority will pledge notably to make efforts to cut its $75 million budget deficit, Israel to stop levying customs duty on equipment and goods to the autonomous territories.

The 42 countries invited to attend include Norway, whose mediation led the historic Middle East peace accord signing, as well as the United States, Japan, the European Union, Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia.

Lebanon and Syria have not yet confirmed their participation.

The conference will also including the signing by Mr. Arafat and French Premier Alain Juppe of a Franco-Palestinian financial protocol for 1995 of 77.5 million francs ($15.5 million).

Jordan expects foreign share buying this year

AMMAN (R) — Jordan's stock exchange expects 1996 trading to be revived by foreign investors inspired by a better investment climate, the market's director said Friday.

"Yes 1996, hopefully will be the year of the foreign funds... They will give a new source of demand on stock, this will create higher activity and balance the new supply of stock from new investments," Umayya Toukan, the director general of the Amman Financial Market, told Reuters.

Dr. Toukan said 36 emerging market funds applied to invest an estimated 145 million dinars ($205 million) in 1995, but their applications were frozen while Jordan revamped its investment law.

The new law, approved in December, allowed foreign investors direct entry to Jordan's stock market for the first time and eliminated a cumbersome case-by-case approval system.

Dr. Toukan said there was "tremendous interest" in Jordan by U.S. and European funds with billion-dollar portfolios.

However he forecast funds would "enter gradually with no hurry" with their focus on blue chips to be held in long-term portfolios. That interest can only help to add depth to a market now capitalised at $4.2 billion.

Investors hope to see hundreds of millions of dollars of foreign capital enter the market to inject much-needed capital. They foresee Jordanian stocks included in Middle East emerging market funds to be launched in 1996.

Funds with past approvals bought eight million dinars of key bluechips in 1995, Dr. Toukan said.

Jordan's stock market index ended 1995 at 159.17 points, up 10.84 per cent on the year but 12 per cent below the record of 181.63 points in 1993. Turnover fell 15.4 per cent to 419 million dinars in 1995 from 494.9 million dinars in 1994.

Dr. Toukan blamed last year's lower turnover on the more than 300 million dinars of new issues which diverted funds from the official market's more-than-100 listed stocks. Activity was also reduced by high interest rates aimed at bolstering the dinar and by alternative investment in real estate.

Investors say a lack of tangible benefits from Jordan's peace treaty with Israel and worsening relations with Iraq, the country's main market, also had a negative impact on a market sensitive to regional politics.

But traders see the market buttressed in 1996 by prospects of peace between Israel and Syria, improved relations with Gulf states and closer economic ties with the West Bank, a natural market for Jordanian products.

Dr. Toukan also said the Amman market, enhancing its regional competitiveness to attract foreign funds, would soon enter into joint listings of leading blue chips with Bahrain's market, to be followed later with the Muscat exchange.

The Amman Financial Market would also have a joint listing with the future Palestinian stock exchange, being currently set up in the West Bank town of Nablus, Dr. Toukan said.

Private economists see 2% growth in U.S. this year

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The U.S. economy is expected to grow at a modest two per cent rate in 1996, with few signs of a recession on the horizon, according to a consensus estimate of Wall Street economists.

"We don't have a lot of history to help us figure where we may go from here, but there doesn't seem to be any of the imbalances in the economy that usually precede a downturn," said Ed Campbell, chief economist with Brown Brothers Harriman.

"I think we will grow somewhere around two per cent in 1996," he said.

Mr. Campbell said that the U.S. Federal Reserve's interest rate hikes in 1994 and early 1995 appear to have kept the economy from overheating, allowing modest growth to continue.

The economy is now in its 56th month of expansion, one of the longest since World War II, and most economists remain optimistic that the growth will continue through 1996, although at a slower rate.

Mike Moran, senior economist with Daiwa Securities, said "the Federal Reserve pretty much achieved what it wanted. We are now in a very mature economy that is growing at its long-term potential growth rate."

In 1995 U.S. gross domestic product increased at an annual rate of 1.7 per cent in the first quarter, 0.7 per cent in the second quarter and three per cent in the thrid quarter, based on government estimates using a new measurement system.

Washington has yet to release fourth quarter figures.

The government says its new chain-weighted measurement system takes better account of rapid price changes in the economy, such as in the value of technology products and durable equipment, than the previous fixed-weight method.

In 1994, GDP rose at a 4.1 per cent rate, based on the old fixed-weight measurement system.

Inflation at the consumer level is expected to remain in check at about 2.9 per cent in 1996, according to the analysts. For the first 11 months of 1995, the inflation rate was 2.6 per cent and for all of 1994, it was 2.7 per cent.

According to the OECD, the United States seems headed for two years of moderate growth with stable inflation and a modest decline in its external deficit, despite uncertainties over the federal budget battle.

The Paris-based Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) said in its Economic Outlook that the U.S. economy appeared to be bouncing back from a sharp slowdown in the first half of 1995 after a brisk 1994 performance.

It said GDP was estimated to have grown by about 3.3 per cent in 1995 as a whole, down from last year's 4.1 per cent, and the most probable outcome for the coming two years was a more moderate expansion of 2.6 to 2.7 per cent.

The OECD projected stable inflation, with the GDP deflator edging up from 1.6 per cent in 1995 to 1.7 per cent in 1996 and 1.9 per cent in 1997, and the consumer price index rising from 2.2 to 2.4 per cent after dipping slightly in 1996.

But it also saw a modest increase in the jobless rate, from 5.6 per cent of the work force this year to about 6.0 per cent in 1997, with job creation likely to fall short of the projected rise in labour supply.

OECD economists said growth should be spurred by several factors over the next two years. The drop in interst rates, which were sharply up last year, and a reduction in the stock of unsold housing should generate renewed growth in residential construction.

Continued expansion of business investment, although at a slower pace, should be supported by still high levels of capacity utilisation, cost-cutting and ample profitability as well as credit supply.

And export growth is projected to rebound because of renewed strength in export markets, notably as Mexico recovers from its financial crisis and Japan emerges from recession over the next two years.

In sum, the OECD said, private final demand would support a resumption of moderate growth, although corporate stockbuilding could be adjusted to a lower demand profile.

On the other hand, the efforts to cut the federal deficit seemed likely to reduce federal purchases by about 5.0 per cent per annum in real terms.

The U.S. current account deficit meanwhile widened further this year to some $170 billion or 2.5 per cent of GDP because of earlier terms of trade losses and growth differentials between the United States and some of its key trading partners, in particular Mexico and Japan.

The OECD report welcomed the recent U.S. consensus on the need to balance the federal budget by financial year 2002, and voiced its support for achieving agreement on a credible plan that would entail some front-loading of cuts.

Citing some uncertainties in the near-term outlook, the OECD said slower than projected growth was possible over the next two years because of a heavily indebted household sector and the prospect of further budgetary consolidation.

But it also did not rule out the possibility of a return to brisker rates of expansion based on factors such as continued strong consumer and business confidence, faster export market growth and ample credit supply.

The "major uncertainty," however, was the outcome of the federal budget debate. The OECD said financial markets had clearly discounted the possibility of an outcome that would not put the economy on the path to a balanced budget by early in the next decade.

The recent rally on security markets "could well be vulnerable to an unexpected failure to reach agreement," according to the authors of the report, completed at the end of November."

Crosswords not received

THE BETTER HALF® By Glasbergen

"Your father makes rude noises at the dinner table. But I guess it's better than no communication at all!"

JUMBLE® THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

NECEP

NAYGO

GRUBEO

VECIED

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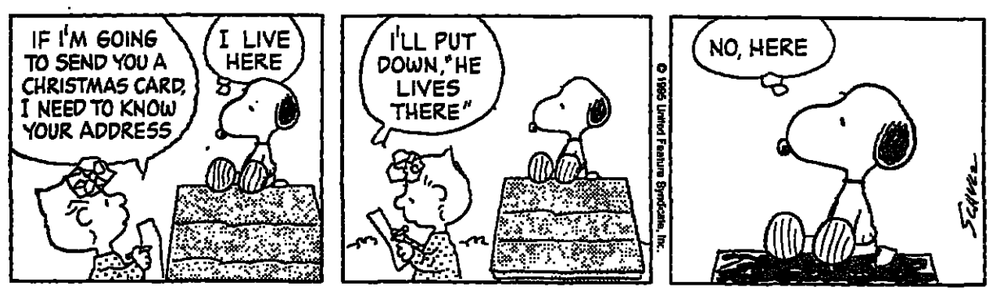
Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer here :

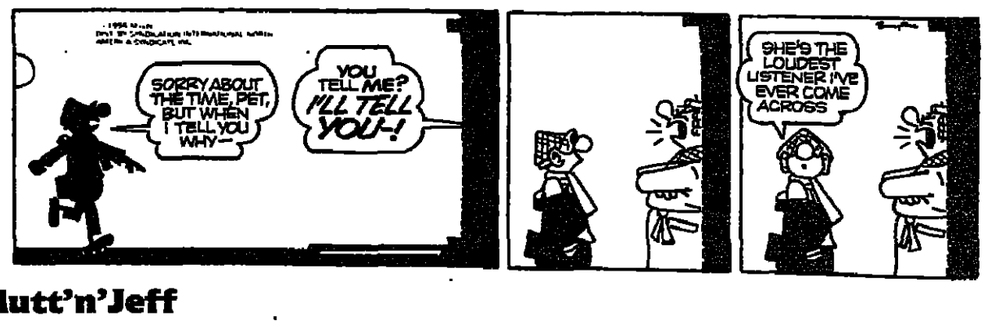
(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: CURVE FLANK BODILY BRANDY
Answer: Often thrown out during spring cleaning — YOUR BACK

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, JANUARY 7, 1996

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You can finally be able to comprehend at this time something which has been puzzling to you for some time. Look into different outlets.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) In the morning today, you can come to a fine arrangement with a fellow associate. Keep busy and accomplish a good deal by this evening.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Plan how to accomplish more during the coming week and then handle any civic duties which await your attention for your success.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Be with friends you like and enjoy during the daytime and be happy. Take time to enjoy a favourite hobby for personal fulfillment.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Enjoy your home and family during the daytime today and then later tonight take them out for a treat and fun. Budget your money wisely.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Find the right philosophy of life which goes along with your own thinking and you can become more successful in the days ahead.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Plan just how to add to your present abundance in the morning today, and study brochures which are helpful to you to be successful.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) First study your finest ambitions and then figure out how best to gain them. Be with friends who are jolly and have fun together.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Make appointments for the recreations you like with compatibles and keep them on time. Your mate can be very pleasant.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Study your personal aims and go after those which are readily attainable. Gain the backing of advisor who can be very helpful.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) The outside world can be your oyster during the daytime today, but your home is your best bet in later in the evening.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) By being more persistent and purposeful today, you can attain your finest wishes for being successful in your career activities.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

Gold price rally aims to break $400, analysts say

LONDON (R) — Gold prices could shoot to their highest prices since 1990 during the next few days after one of its most bullish starts to a year in decades, bullion market analysts said Friday.

The yellow metal was fixed at $396.40 per ounce on Friday morning, up from $394.25 on Thursday and within a whisker of the high-price of 1995 set on April 5.

"It is feasible to see gold at between $400 and $420 on the basis of the amount of fund buying and the lack of selling," said Ted Arnold, metals market analyst at Merrill Lynch.

Mr. Arnold said that sell orders were being cancelled until it became clear that the rally was overextended.

Bullion stumbled in a very narrow price range around an average of $384.05 last year, according to figures from analysts Gold Field Mineral Services (GFMS) issued Friday.

It has not been priced above $400 since March-August 1993.

That was when a well-orchestrated entry of financiers George Soros and James Goldsmith led a rally from around $326.10, the lowest fix since January 1986, to $406.70, the highest since Jan. 16, 1991.

"There is more to go on this. Everybody is so bullish. We may see well some profit-taking, then another push," said Mr. Arnold.

One issue which caused the market professionals to ponder was the enormous rise of over 28,000 in open interest on the COMEX gold futures market this week.

Open interest shows the number of outstanding contracts on the market which are not offset by an opposing transaction.

A rise indicates increased liquidity in the market and most of this week's rise was in uncovered purchases, or "longs," analysts said.

"Rises (in open interest) like this tend to mean the price has got to the top of its range. The only time recently it did not was when George Soros came into the market in 1993 and it took two-three months to unwind," said bullion analyst Andy Smith at Union Bank of Switzerland.

"I hope we are not going to get all this year's excitement crammed into the first week," Mr. Smith added.

He said the current investment fund-led move was bullish for gold if there was a genuine resource reallocation bringing gold back into funds' investment portfolios.

"If it is, this could be the start of something big. If not, it is highly reversible," he said.

Physical demand for gold has been quiet during the past few days of surging prices, but it hit a record level last year according to the GFMS figures.

"Demand from jewellery makers alone last year exceeded mine supply by over 450 tonnes or more than nine weeks of mine output," said Rhona O'Connell, metals analyst at stockbroker T. Hoare and Co.

"The only possible response is an upward rerating in prices (this year) if a supply shortfall is to be avoided without selling from the central banks, or about 550 tonnes of forward selling by producers, which is unlikely," she said.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET

HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHMEISANI
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 06/01/1996

COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED JD	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
ARAB BANK PLC	760	173848	231.000	231.500
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	350	1575	4.500	4.500
GULF BANK INVESTMENT BANK.	300	360	1.200	1.200
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	5290	13228	2.510	2.520
HOUSING BANK	1000	7071	4.740	4.720
JORDAN GULF BANK	30125	32246	1.080	1.080
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	2026	7203	3.880	3.590
ARAB BANK FOR INVESTMENT	10150	9135	.900	.900
ARAB BANKING CORPORATION/JORDAN	200	1112	5.850	5.560
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK.	5600	8259	1.480	1.460
BANKS SECTOR	56241	252035	INDEX NUMBER: 185.03 CHANGE	: +0.13%
JORDAN SEAS INSURANCE	4000	7200	1.850	1.800
INSURANCE SECTOR	4000	7200	INDEX NUMBER: 130.32 CHANGE	: -0.17%
JORDAN ELECTRIC POWER	4734	8188	1.740	1.730
JORDAN HOTEL & TOURISM	100	890	8.900	8.900
IRBID DISTRICT ELECTRICITY	5000	6400	1.270	1.280
JORDAN PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	2050	3596	1.770	1.760
REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	3750	3750	1.000	1.000
ARAB INTER. FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	15575	53392	3.380	3.440
PETRA PRIVATE UNIVERSITY	1050	1984	1.200	1.210
PETRA CO. FOR ORGANIZING LAND TRANS.	150	339	2.250	2.260
JORDAN LAND DEVELOPMENT CORP.	250	273	1.150	1.090
SERVICES SECTOR	33259	78811	INDEX NUMBER: 129.58 CHANGE	: +0.11%
JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	2024	7317	3.630	3.620
JORDAN PHOSPHATE MINES	988	2880	3.230	3.240
ARAB POTASH	2150	11566	5.650	5.370
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY	650	6549	10.200	10.040
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL	100	362	3.600	3.620
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	500	2190	4.490	4.380
JORDAN DAIRY	600	1533	2.600	2.550
JORDAN PIPES MANUFACTURING	400	940	2.400	2.350
AL DAWA DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	1160	8813	7.800	7.650
JORDAN STOCK & POULTRY	11900	7067	.600	.590
ARAB PAPER CONVERTING & TRADING	5500	7808	1.430	1.410
NATIONAL INDUSTRIES	4600	4736	1.020	1.030
INTERMEDIATE PETRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	700	1181	1.700	1.680
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM. & CHEMICALS	1650	2937	1.820	1.780
OTHER INVESTMENT	100	155	1.550	1.550
SPECIAL MODERN INDUSTRIES	2650	8376	3.160	3.260
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	6700	13266	1.990	1.980
JORDAN NEW CABLE COMPANY	6350	8906	1.420	1.400
JORDAN READY WEAR MANUFACTURING CO.	850	1887	2.220	2.220
INTERNATIONAL TOBACCO & CIGARETTES	2500	3450	1.390	1.300
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	52042	101917	INDEX NUMBER: 122.11 CHANGE	: -2.14%
GRAND TOTAL	145542	439902	INDEX NUMBER: 153.98 CHANGE	: -0.84%

NO. OF TRADED SHARES IN PARALLEL MARKET : 47109
VALUE TRADED IN PARALLEL MARKET : 51563

Choppier skies seen for Asian airlines

SINGAPORE (R) — Asian airlines should brace for more intense competition in the regional skies as they fly into 1996 with a baggage of excess capacity, low yields and high costs, analysts have warned.

Excess capacity, built up as a result of attempts by airlines to cash in on a growing regional travel market, could set off another round of fare cuts denting their bottom-lines, analysts said.

The new year follows an encouraging period that saw most regional carriers improve their earnings after emerging from a long recession, but the extent of the recovery is still uncertain, they said.

"We have seen one good period in 1995 and a part of 1994," said David Lum, airline analyst at J.M. Sassoon and Co. (Pte.) Ltd. here.

"I guess it is encouraging in that there is a recovery in the industry although the strength and extent of the recovery is not certain," Mr. Lum said.

The Orient Airlines Association, which groups Asia-Pacific carriers, reported a 308 per cent annual jump in the combined net profits of 15 members to $1.306 billion in the last fiscal year.

Passenger traffic grew by 6.7 per cent to 164.1 million, freight traffic by 11.8 per cent to 4.8 million tonnes and total operating revenue rose 16.2 per cent to $45.12 billion.

"Many airlines are now showing improvement in terms of passenger and cargo traffic, resulting in a better financial performance in 1995," said Rick Clements, spokesman of Singapore Airlines, the world's most profitable carrier.

"However, overcapacity in several markets is resulting in fierce competition. The cargo market, especially, is now much more competitive. This continues to put pressure on yields, which are slowly recovering but still lower than we would like to see," Mr. Clements said.

"Given the excessive cargo capacity and the discounting, we cannot be too bullish about the coming year...," he said, adding that dynamic Asia-Pacific growth, however, offset any pessimism.

Regional airline capacity has outpaced passenger and cargo traffic growth, analysts say.

Cost pressures from labour, fuel, interest and leasing charges have been rising while passenger yields — revenue per unit load — have been under pressure amid rising competition with new entrants and Western carriers adding to the capacity.

Passenger load factors — the average number of seats occupied — of its member airlines only grew by 0.5 per cent in 67.6 per cent in the last fiscal year, according to the Orient Airlines Association.

"Traffic growth is still buoyant so Asian airlines are building more capacity," said Chui Hoon, airline analyst at Merrill Lynch and Co.

"It is unlikely that yields will improve," she said, adding the industry was at best trying to keep yields constant.

Analysts predict that the Asia-Pacific region will account for 50 per cent of global air traffic by 2010, prompting an aggressive capacity expansion by regional carriers.

World's 'biggest dairy farm' seeks place in Guinness record book

RIYADH (AFP) — A Saudi dairy company owned by a member of the ruling family is seeking to enter the Guinness book of records as the biggest dairy farm in the world, its marketing manager said.

Al Safi Dairy Company, owned by Prince Abdullah Al Faisal, has 24,000 cows producing 13 million litres of milk and other dairy products per year, Mohammad Serhan told reporters at the company headquarters.

Production by the farm, 100 kilometres from Riyadh, accounts for nearly 15 per cent of Saudi Arabia's total dairy output of 650 million litres per year and it has 22 factories and a fleet of 320 vans.

"We are taking measures to verify this as Guinness does not have a section for such an activity. We have been awarded a certificate by the Saudi agriculture ministry and have written to dairy groups around the world to assert our right for that title," Mr. Serhan said.

Most of Al Safi's production is marketing inside Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil producer and exporter. The rest is sold in the other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states.

DAILY BUSINESS BEAT

A review of news from the Arabic press

Treasury collects JD 6m from Petra visitors

☆☆ THE TREASURY collected JD 6,015,221 in fees paid by 337,221 visitors who toured Petra last year. Of the number of visitors, 287,635 were foreign tourists and 39,562 were Jordanians. According to Suleiman Al Farajat, Petra antiquities manager, the number of visitors was much higher than in previous years with the largest number (43,050 visitors) coming in April 1995. In March, the number of visitors stood at 38,550 visitors. Mr. Farajat said that 36,057 persons from official delegations and school and university students also visited Petra last year. He expected an active tourism season this year with the number of visitors surging much higher than last year (Al Ra'i).

Work begins on second phase of cellular phone system

☆☆ WORK HAS started to implement the second phase of the cellular phone system which covers the northern and southern parts of the Kingdom including the city of Aqaba. According to Yousef Abu Jamous, the director-general of the Commission for Organising Communications Sector, the third phase is expected to start after the completion of the second stage by the end of 1997. The third stage, expected for completion by the end of 1999, will comprise connecting main cities with each other, Mr. Abu Jamous said noting that in the fourth and final phase the main desert roads will be linked with neighbouring countries at the appropriate time. The first stage of this project covered the Amman region, Zarqa, Salt and Madaba as the Jordan Mobile Telephone Services Company has equipped the system for 15,800 subscribers and is now in the process of importing the equipment to expand the cellular exchange to benefit 40,000 subscribers (Al Ra'i).

Arab Real Estate Development Company floats shares for public subscription

☆☆ PUBLIC SUBSCRIPTION is now open to buy shares in the Arab Real Estate Development Company, a new public shareholding company capitalised at JD 5 million and registered at the Ministry of Industry and Trade under number 293 on Sept. 28, 1995. The company, founded by 83 Jordanian, Kuwaiti and Lebanese investors, aims at setting up and owning real estate projects of all kinds. The founders have acquired 3.75 million shares priced at JD 1 each and the remaining 1.25 million shares are being offered to the public until the end of January 1996. The minimum number of shares an investor can buy was set at 900 shares although only 50 per cent of the cost should be paid upon subscribing with the rest to be settled over a period not exceeding four years. The main founders of the company are: The Arab Life and Accident Insurance Company (JD 500,000), the Arab Development and Investment Company (JD 370,000), Al Riyadh for Manufacturing Vegetable Oils Company (JD 250,000), the Arab Banking Corporation (Jordan) (JD 200,000), the Housing Bank (JD 200,000), Philadelphia Bank (JD 150,000), Emil Ibrahim Nasif Haddad (JD 100,000), Kamal Abdo Al Shaer (JD100,000), Ahmad Hasan Shahin (JD 150,000) and the Al Salah for Engineering Contracting Corporation (JD 100,000). The Kuwaiti investors: Abdul Mohsen Al Qattan (JD 200,000), Naser Mohammad Naser (JD 69,000), Dhirar Yousef Al Ghanem (JD 50,000) and Leila Mohammad Al Dhabeeb (JD 50,000). Said Tawfiq Al Khoury, a Lebanese national, had JD 100,000 equity. Most of the other founders had less than JD 20,000 investment (Al Ra'i).

Financial Markets

Jordan Times in co-operation with Cairo Amman Bank

U.S. Dollar in International Markets

Currency	New York Closing Date 4/1/96	New York Closing Date 5/1/96
Sterling Pound*	1.5515	1.5525
Deutsche Mark	1.4425	1.4395
Swiss Franc	1.1628	1.1675
French Franc	4.9277	4.9265
Japanese Yen	105.25	105.36
European Currency Unit	1.2800	1.2868

* USD Per STG
** European Opening @ 8:00 a.m. GMT

Eurocurrency Interest Rates — Date: 6/1/1995

Currency	1 MTH	3 MTHS	6 MTHS	12 MTHS
U.S. Dollar	5.37	5.31	5.25	5.12
Sterling Pound	6.31	6.31	6.18	6.18
Deutsche Mark	3.56	3.50	3.37	3.37
Swiss Franc	1.56	1.50	1.50	1.50
French Franc	4.377	4.37	4.37	4.37
Japanese Yen	0.25	0.31	0.37	0.43
European Currency Unit	4.87	4.93	4.93	4.88

Interbank bid rates for amounts exceeding U.S. Dollars 1,000,000 or equivalent.

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin — Date: 6/1/1996

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.7080	0.7100
Sterling Pound	1.0979	1.1036
Deutsche Mark	0.4911	0.4936
Swiss Franc	0.6089	0.6119
French Franc	0.1436	0.1443
Japanese Yen*	0.6713	0.6747
Dutch Guilder	0.4388	0.4410
Swedish Krona	*****	*****
Italian Lira*	0.0447	0.0449
Belgian Franc	*****	*****

* Per 100

Other Currencies — Date: 6/1/1996

Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.8620	1.8780
Lebanese Lira*	0.043000	0.044500
Saudi Riyal	0.1870	0.1898
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.3870	2.3670
Qatari Riyal	0.1932	0.1945
Egyptian Pound	0.2100	0.2200
Omani Riyal	1.8330	1.8410
UAE Dirham	0.1922	0.1933
Greek Drachma*	0.2855	0.3125
Cyprist Pound	1.5225	1.5825

* Per 100

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Guinea get Nigeria's slot

CAIRO (AFP) — Guinea were drafted into the African Nations Cup on Saturday after holders Nigeria failed to react to a Confederation of African Football (CAF) ultimatum.

Nigeria, who refused to take part in South Africa because they feared for their players' safety, are now expected to be banned for the next two tournaments through to 2000 after refusing to change their minds.

A CAF meeting on the 9th and 10th of January will discuss disciplinary measures against Nigeria.

Guinea were brought in after coming the best third in the qualifying round. They will play in Group C in Durban.

Relations between Nigeria and South Africa plummeted in November after nine minority rights activists, including writer Ken Saro-Wiwa, were executed by Nigeria's military authorities.

The chairman of the Nigerian Football Federation (NFA), retired Air General Emeka Omeruah, accepted the decision in Lagos with resignation.

But he added a ban would not kill off the sport in the country, saying: "Football cannot die in Nigeria. No way."

Ghana bank on foreign-based stars

ACCRA (R) — Four-time champions Ghana are self-confident, optimistic and even a bit boastful in the run-up to this month's African Nations Cup finals in South Africa.

They are banking on star strikers such as Anthony Yeboah of English Premier League club Leeds and captain Abedi Pele of Italy's Torino to give them an attacking edge.

But the challenge facing the Black Stars' head coach Ismael Kurtz is to weld a welter of foreign-based talent into a solid team in a limited amount of time.

"We always go in to win. We are the champions, you know, says Fred Duodu, secretary of the Ghana Football Association.

"We have won the Cup four times. No other African nation has done that."

Kurtz, a soft-spoken Brazilian, is more prudent but far from pessimistic.

"There are strong chances for the team to win in South Africa," he told Reuters.

"I have confidence in the team. We are in a good position to win because there is very good discipline inside the group."

Kurtz, 56, says the relationship between the players — "the boys" — is "like a family."

"The big stars give the young boys good support," he explains.

But he acknowledges that it is not going to be easy.

Ghana play in a opening round group that includes Tunisia, Mozambique and Ivory Coast. The tournament opens on January 13, with the final on February 3.

"Our group is very tough. But these days soccer in Africa is very strong — there is good development of soccer in Africa," Kurtz says.

While only six foreign-based professionals turned out for a November 11 warm-up friendly against Sierra Leone, which the Stars won 2-0, Ghana can draw on as many as 14 for the Nations' Cup finals.

Apart from Yeboah and Pele, they have strength in depth up front with Charles Akunnor of German club Fortuna Koln, Yaw Preko of Anderlecht in Belgium, Felix Aboagye of Al Ahly in Egypt, Kwame Ayew of Uniao Leira in Portugal and Charles Whittle of Swiss club Neuchatel Xamax.

Midfielders include Ali Ibrahim of Grasshoppers of Zurich, Nii Odartey Lamtey of English club Coventry and Yaw Acheampong of Spain's Real Sociedad.

In defence there is Sam Johnson who plays for Kalamata in Greece, Joe Addo of FSV Frankfurt in Germany and goalkeeper Abubaker Tanko, who plays for El Masry in Egypt.

The Ghanaians are due to arrive in Johannesburg four days before the January 13 start of the finals.

In the meantime, Kurtz will be doing his best to promote a spirit of teamwork.

"I would like to have the whole team together at least three weeks before the start of the games in South Africa. I'm afraid two weeks is all we can get," he says.

Premier League roundup

Wihdat, Faisali close gap on Ramtha

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Although standings remained relatively unchanged this week, competition is heating up in the Kingdom's Premier League soccer championship with Al Ramtha still topping the standings with 34 points.

Although they have relatively easy opponents in Al Baqaa in their upcoming match, Al Ramtha's lead is expected to be slashed in coming weeks after they were held to a 0-0 draw with 7th placed Al Jazireh.

Meanwhile, titleholders Al Wihdat showed they were in championship form with a 5-1 trashing of Al Ahli to move to second place.

Al Wihdat will next face former champions Al Faisali in the Premier League's most awaited match.

Al Faisali's 1-0 win over Al Hussein kept them tied with Al Wihdat with 32 points but dropped to third on goal difference.

Al Hussein, who led the standings throughout most of the first leg are now sixth and they will have a chance to improve when they face Sahab next week.

The week's biggest winners were Al Qadissieh who scored a 6-0 win over Al Baqaa. Although they remained in fourth place, Al Qadissieh improved their overall points to 30 and have an important match with Kufrsoum next week.

Kufrsoum, playing the Premier League for the second consecutive season, moved up to fifth after their 2-1 win over Sahab.

Meanwhile, Al Jalil scored a hard-fought 5-4 win over Al Russeifa who lost their 16th match and are yet to earn a point in the standings.

STANDINGS AFTER 16TH WEEK

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Ramtha	16	10	4	2	23	6	34
Wihdat	16	9	5	2	30	15	32
Faisali	16	9	5	2	26	11	32
Qadisieh	16	9	3	4	27	15	30
Kufrsoum	16	7	7	2	23	14	28
Hussein	16	7	5	4	31	15	26
Jazireh	16	6	5	5	27	22	23
Ahli	16	4	7	5	22	19	19
Baqaa	16	5	3	8	22	29	18
Sahab	16	1	8	7	12	24	11
Jalil	16	2	2	12	19	42	8
Russeifah	16	-	-	16	15	64	-

U-18 women's basketball team begins training toda

By Aleen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Kingdom's national basketball teams start the new year on a positive note Sunday with the regrouping of new team — the Under-18 junior women's team — an age group which had never before been seriously considered.

At least 39 players representing three clubs as well as others are to start practice today. Their goal: The 13th Asian Junior Women's Championship scheduled to be held in Bangkok, Thailand April 21-28.

The Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) received the invitation from the Asian Basketball Confederation only recently and time is certainly not on the team's side especially since the players have never played anything beyond their local school and club championships alongside their older teammates on their respective teams.

However, the JBF and its women's basketball committee seem keen on regrouping the team and a possible participation in the championship if all goes well.

While the players must try to attend a rigorous and cramped training schedule alongside school and tawjihi examinations, the JBF will have the hard task of securing funding for the team's participation.

"We hope these matters will be solved and the team will make be able to register Jordan's first participation in such a championship," JBF member Muna Janho told the Jordan Times.

The JBF, considered to be one of the most active sports federations in the King seems to be set on keeping women's ba ball alive after more than a decade absence of the national team. The fact only three clubs currently maintain won teams has also led to the deterioration o women's game in past years.

The picture became brighter however the JBF last summer succeeded in the arduous task of the long-awaited regrouping of women's team which became the first only Arab team to take part in the A Basketball Championship.

The competition which took place in Japanese city of Shizuoka was the sta point for the comeback of women's baske in Jordan. The trip was made possible w generous donation from Their Royal H nesses Crown Prince Hassan and Pri Sarvath who made the participation pos by covering the team's travel expenses the JBF's fund-raising campaign fell sho its target.

The Kingdom's team scored their only over Indonesia and lost to Hong K Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines made a momentous impression among A basketball officials. One of the team's players Jumana Salti was chosen an Asia's top five.

The JBF and its women's basketball committee seem determined not to make women's first participation the only and one. Following the regrouping of the ju U-18 team the women's team will soo called back to work to start preparations for the 1997 championship.

Croatia win Hopman Cup

Switzerland's 15-year-old Martina Hingis

PERTH (R) — Marc Rosset handed Croatia the Hopman Cup on Saturday after he lost his temper during the deciding doubles of the final and punched an advertising hoarding.

The Swiss number one was forced to withdraw through injury with the score on a tantalising 3-6, 7-6, 5-5 in the final set of the doubles, after the singles matches had been shared between the finalists.

Rosset's temper flared during the nerve-racking 10th game of the final set after he and his partner, 15-year-old Martina Hingis, had failed to convert four match points.

He continued in obvious pain following an examination by doctors but after taking a 30-0 lead on Hingis's serve he dropped his racket, clutched his right hand and walked off court forefeiting the match and the final.

Earlier he had lost his singles to big-serving Goran Ivanisevic 7-6, 7-5, while Hingis took only 47 minutes to beat Iva Majoli 6-3, 6-0.

"It is tough forme to explain how sorry I am. I shouldn't have done it but sometimes it is hard to control (yourself)," said Rosset after the match.

He was taken to a nearby hospital for X-rays which *proved inconclusive but doctors* suspected a hairline fracture in his hand and bound it in a splint. He was expected to undergo a bone scan on Monday in Sydney.

Tennis officials said Rosset was likely to miss next week's Peters International Tournament in Sydney, a warm-up competition for the Australian Open the following week.

Rosset was also warned by the umpire for racket abuse during the mixed doubles as players from both sides showed their frustration following mistakes.

Majoli narrowly missed an *official when she threw her* racket in disappointment after an error on her part gave the Swiss the first set.

"It doesn't feel like tory. It was a half win," Ivanisevic afterwards.

Rosset and Ivanis thundered down 35 aces tween them during t closely-fought singles b

The Swiss man won games — one in either s entirely with aces.

Ivanisevic eventually the duel in a flurry of p ful shots, taking the last games of the match.

Hingis had Majoli ga for breath as she hit win both forehand and backh to sail through the last games of their match.

Johnson's Olympic double dream gets boost

TURIN (AFP) — Michael Johnson's dream of doubling up over the 200 and 400m at the Olympic Games came a step closer here on Saturday after athletics chief Primo Nebiolo predicted an events reshuffle.

International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) president Primo Nebiolo said the body was keen to "move towards Johnson, Lewis and the champions who compete in the most events."

Nebiolo, speaking to La Stampa daily newspaper, added: "It's important to put on a big show for the American public."

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Sprus, Sonics and Suns lose

SAN ANTONIO (R) — "Awful" was the word that came to mind for the San Antonio Spurs after a 105-92 loss to the Indiana Pacers on Friday.

"I can't think of anything to say," said Spurs star centre David Robinison, who was held to 14 points on 5-of-17 shooting. "It was one of those awful nights. I don't think I played like this since I was in high school."

Reggie Miller scored all 19 of his points in the first quarter and Eddie Johnson added 11 of his 26 points in the second quarter as the Pacers raced to a 26-point halftime lead and won their third straight, all on the road.

The Spurs, who scored just 12 points in the second quarter, had a season-low 34 points at halftime.

"We were the pace-setter," Miller said. "We wanted out of the gates quick and that is just what we did."

Sean Elliott scored 28 points and Avery Johnson added 18 points and six assists for San Antonio, which had its three-game winning streak snapped. Robinson added nine rebounds and seven blocked shots.

"The first half of the game was by far the best half that we've played all year," said Indiana coach Larry Brown.

"I've watched the Spurs play for a long time and this is the worst that I've ever seen them play, but they kept coming," Brown said.

"They were great, we were awful," said Spurs coach Bob Hill.

In Vancouver, Blue Edwards hit a 17-footer at the buzzer in overtime and Greg Anthony converted a pair of three-point plays in the extra session as the Grizzlies edged the Philadelphia 76ers 103-102.

Anthony scored 32 points and Edwards had 19 for expansion Vancouver, which has won consecutive games for the first time since the first two games of the season.

Trevor Ruffin had 27 points and nine assists, Clarence Weatherspoon had 20 points and 20 rebounds and Sharone Wright added 19 and 15 for Philadelphia, which lost for the seventh time in eight games.

At Golden State, rookie Joe Smith sank a pair of free throws with 7.2 seconds left in overtime to lift the Warriors past the Minnesota Timberwolves 122-119, extending their winning streak to a season-high four games.

Smith finished with 24 points and Rony Seikaly scored seven of his 31 points in the final 80 seconds for Golden State.

Tom Gugliotta had 36 points and Christian Laettner added 22 for Minnesota.

In Los Angeles, Pooh Richardson scored 20 points, including the game-clinching free throws with 15.4 seconds remaining, as the Clippers snapped a three-game losing streak with a 94-88 victory over the Phoenix Suns.

Brian Williams had 18 points and 14 rebounds while Loy Vaught added 17 and 16 for the Clippers.

Charles Barkley had 26 points and 12 rebounds for the Suns, who have lost three straight.

In Inglewood, Cedric Ceballos snapped out of a mini slump with 28 points and Nick Van Exel added 26 as the Los Angeles Lakers snapped their three-game losing streak with a 116-100 victory over the Utah Jazz.

Ceballos, who had not broken the 20-point barrier in five previous games, was 11-of-14 from the floor.

Chris Morris led Utah with 23 points and Karl Malone added 21.

In Boston, Dino Radja scored 20 points and Rick Fox came within two assists of a triple-double as the Celtics defeated the Cleveland Cavaliers 93-77 to snap a five-game losing streak.

Fox scored 13 points and grabbed 16 rebounds and Dee Brown added 18 points for Boston.

NBA results

Boston	93	Cleveland	77
New Jersey	107	Dallas	99
Orlando	115	Seattle	93
Indiana	105	San Antonio	92
Milwaukee	113	Portland	96
Vancouver	103	Philadlephia	102 (OT)
Golden State	122	Minnesota	119 (OT)
LA Clippers	94	Phoenix	88
LA Lakers	116	Utah	100

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Chinese swimmers dominate at short-course World Cup

HONG KONG (AFP) — Chinese swimmers won nine gold medals to outclass an international field as competition began here Saturday at the opening event of the 1996 World cup short course series.

The Chinese women, led by Jia Yuanyuan, triumphed in six of eight events.

Jia, a newcomer on the international scene, took gold in the women's 50m and 200m backstroke.

The rapidly emerging Chinese men's team won three of nine gold medals.

Chinese swimmers took a total of 17 medals, including five silver and three bronze. Japan was second with three gold, two silver and a bronze.

Multiple world-record holder Le Jingyi began the Chinese sweep, taking gold in the women's 200m freestyle.

Liu Limin won the women's 100m butterfly in 59.44 seconds, juset below her world record of 58.68, which she set last month at the world short-course championships on Rio de Janeiro's Copacabana beach.

Teammate Han Xue took the women's 100m breaststroke while Chen Yan placed first in the women's 200m individual medley.

Britain's Sara Hopkins topped the women's 50m freestyle event while Eri Yamanoi of Japan placed first in the women's 8 freestyle.

In men's competit Wang Yiwu took the 2 breaststroke, the even won at the Rio ch pionships to become first Chinese man to w world swimming title.

Jiang Chengji won men's 50m butterfly Zhao Lifeng took men's 100m indivi medley. Japan's Ta Kinugasa won for men's 500m indivi medley and Keitaro I nai the men's 100m b stroke.

The competition, w has attracted more tha swimmers from 14 c tries, continues Su with 17 more finals.

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Countdown begins for Asian Squash Championship

By Aleen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The countdown has begun for the 8th Asian Squash Championship which opens here Monday with 13 countries taking part.

As the Jordan Squash Federation (JSF) was putting the finishing touches on final preparations, delegations of participating countries started arriving in Amman for the week-long championship.

Bahrain, Hong Kong, India, South Korea, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan, Palestine, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Taiwan and Jordan will be competing in the largest Asian gathering of the sport headed by world champion Jansher Khan of Pakistan.

The opening ceremony will be held Monday afternoon at Al Hussein Youth City's Sports Palace. The competition however will be held at Al Hassan Squash Centre, the Kingdom's newest sports facility which was inaugurated by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan last week.

The region's most sophisticated squash arena offers six courts including two centre courts seating 700 and 200 spectators respectively.

Five Arab countries are among the 13 teams taking part. Jordan will be playing in Group 3 alongside Malaysia and South Korea. The Kingdom's national team includes Hamed Saeed, Mohammad Saeed, Yazeed Adas, Wa'el Tabalat. Qutaiba Taha and Yazan Abdul Rauf will be playing on individual basis.

Team officials are hopeful Jordan will score a good result. Jordan is not in an easy group (Malaysia is Asia's second ranked team) and Jordan will have to get second place in Group 3 to move to the second round. If Jordan beats a group winner in that round the team will play for 1-4th places otherwise they will play from 5-8th places.

Jordan's players have been preparing for quite some time and had matches in Lebanon, Egypt, Germany and the Netherlands. Team captain Hamed Al Saeed just arrived from a training camp in Britain.

Pakistan, the world champion for the past decade, is Asia's top ranked team followed by Malaysia, Hong Kong, India, Singapore, Kuwait and Jordan.

The men's teams were divided into four groups as follows:

Group 1

Pakistan
Sri Lanka
Bahrain

Group 2

Hong Kong
Kuwait
Lebanon

Group 3

Malaysia
Jordan
South Korea

Group 4

India
Singapore
Chinese Taipei
Palestine

The seven women's teams were divided into two groups:

Group 1

Malaysia
India
Sri Lanka

Group 2

Hong Kong
Singapore
S. Korea
Lebanon.

Kafelnikov, Black in Australian showdown

ADELAIDE (AFP) — Russian Yevgeny Kafelnikov will be bidding for his second Australian hardcourt tennis title when he takes on Zimbabwe's Byron Black in Sunday's final here.

Kafelnikov, the top seed and world No. 6, powered into the final when he wore down Argentinian Javier Frana, 7-5, 6-1 on Saturday.

The 21-year-old Russian won the Australian hardcourt crown two years ago in the first ATP all-Russian final, beating experienced compatriot Alexander Volkov in straight sets.

On Saturday Kafelnikov, feeling the Adelaide summer heat after playing his three earlier tournament matches at night, took 74 minutes to overcome the in-form Frana, who had earlier eliminated seeds Todd Woodbridge and Renzo Furlan.

Black, the newcomer of the year in 1991, reached his first ATP final when he defeated unseeded Martin Damm of the Czech Republic 7-5, 6-3.

Black, now 26 and ranked 40, counter-attacked in a match that contained several services breaks.

U.S. government shutdown threatens CONCACAF tournament

MIAMI (R) — Several teams in next week's CONCACAF Gold Cup soccer tournament, their players' visas being held up by the U.S. federal government shutdown, said Friday they would compete only if they could bring their full rosters.

National teams of the United States, Canada, Brazil, Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad-Tobago are due to play the tournament in California starting Wednesday, January 10, and ending 11 days later on Sunday, January 21.

However, the arrival of the teams this weekend has been jeopardised because most of their players could not obtain visas in their homelands due to the U.S. government shutdown caused by protracted federal budget negotiations in Washington, D.C.

"Unfortunately the situation has not changed. We are still in close contact with the (U.S.) government so that the visas are granted to the players and the tournament can take place," Scott Gleba, a spokesman of the CONCACAF organising committee, told Reuters from New York in a telephone interview.

He said the Confederation of North, Central American and Caribbean Football Association (CONCACAF) was not yet considering the possibility of cancelling or postponing the tournament.

"We have not reached that point yet. We are still quite hopeful that the tournament will take place. We have no contingency plans," he said.

Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Brazil, representing Latin American soccer, have said they fear the tournament might have to be cancelled.

Gleba said six of the nine teams were having visa problems. He said the worst off was Brazil, with only one player authorised to enter the United States.

The president of the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF), Ricardo Teixeria, said his team might withdraw from the competition if the problem was not solved by the weekend.

Brazil was to play the tournament with his Under-23 team which is getting ready for the pre-Olympic playoff competition to be held in the Argentine cities of Tandil and Mar Del Plata from February 18 through March 5.

"We are definitively not going unless we can present a full team. We cannot make any changes because of the visa problem," the president of the Mexican Football Federation, Edgardo Codesal, told Reuters in Mexico City.

He said only two Mexican players did not have visas. "But our team will go only if we obtain those two visas. This is our team and we are not going to change it because of this problem."

In the Honduran team, 17 out of 20 players and the Brazilian coach Ernesto Rosa Guedes do not have visa.

"We are innocent victims of this conflict in the United States," the manager of the Honduran team said in Tegucigalpa.

El Salvador's Argentine coach Omar Pastoriza also said he was not prepared to present "half a team in this tournament."

Brazil was scheduled to play Canada on Wednesday in Los Angeles. Canada and Brazil were in Group B with Honduras.

Group A, with Mexico, Guatemala and St. Vincent and the Grenadines was scheduled to play in San Diego.

Group C, with the United States, Trinidad-Tobago and El Salvador, was to play in Anaheim.

A fore-jumper appears to fly over the mountains surrounding Bischofshofen during the official practice for the January 6 World Cup event, the fourth and last stage of the four platforms tournament. Germany's Jens Weissflog leads in the overall classement of the tournament after three events (Reuters photo)

One Man triumphs in King George VI chase

SANDOWN, England (R) — The grey One Man spreadeagled a high-class field with a spectacular display of jumping to win the King George VI chase by 14 lengths on Saturday.

Recalling the glory days of four-times King George VI winner and fellow grey Desert Orchid, One Man trounced 25-1 chance Monsieur Le Cure with the Cheltenham Gold Cup winner Master Oats labouring on into third place three lengths behind.

One Man took the race by the throat when he leapt like a stag into the lead at the 12th of 22 fences and stayed there up the tough Sandown hill to land the race, rescheduled after being abandoned in a Christmas freeze at Kempton Park.

Few racegoers would dispute trainer Gordon Richards' summing up afterwards: "You can take it from me — he is a very good jumper. He just floats along. You could see some great jumps out of him."

Richards told champion jockey Richard Dunwoody, riding One Man for the first time, not to hit the front too soon but the exuberant grey would not be denied, forging his way into the lead.

Steeplechasing is desperate for a new hero after the death last year of triple Grand National winner Red Rum and the retirement of the mighty Desert Orchid, who led the parade at Sandown on Saturday and was champing at the bit to do battle once.

But cautious Richards wasn't making too many comparisons too quickly after One Man's fine display. "Dessie's (Desert Orchid) done it. One Man has still got to do it," he told reporters, referring to the Cheltenham Gold Cup.

Delighted Dunwoody said: "I could not believe how easily he was going down the far side. Desert Orchid is the best I have ever ridden but this horse would not be far off."

Richards hopes to get one more race into One Man before the Gold Cup in March which should crown him as the undoubted king of steeplechasing if he reproduces Saturday's form.

Veteran Richards, who won the King George in 1969 with Titus Oates, said: "I know One Man can improve a little bit from today. There is no reason why he can't go to Cheltenham with a sporting chance."

Well-fancied Irish raider Merry Gale, young hustler and 1993 winner Barton Bank vied for the lead on the first circuit in Saturday's showpiece when the only casualty was the novice Book of Music who fell heavily at the seventh and had to be destroyed.

Coroner questioned in murder trial of Michael Jordan's father

LUMBERTON, North Carolina (R) — The coroner who decided to cremate the body of basketball star Michael Jordan's father before it was identified said on Friday he was ordered not to turn over autopsy reports to a legal defence team.

Coroner Tim Brown of Marlboro County, South Carolina, testified during the murder trial of the man accused of killing James Jordan that he took the unusual step of contacting the state's attorney general's office after the lead defence lawyer Angus Thompson asked for the report.

On trial for his life is Lord Danielle As-Saddiz Al-Amin Sallam U'allah, who legally changed his name from Daniel Green while in prison, for the shooting death of Jordan in 1993.

Authorities say U'allah, 21, shot Jordan, 56, in the chest during a predawn robbery near Lumerton, then dumped the body in Gum Samp near the North Carolina--South Carolina border.

Another man, Larry Demery, 21, was charged in the case but he pleaded guilty in April 1995, and is expected to testify against U'allah in hopes of avoiding a death sentence.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANNAH HIRSCH

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JEAN BESSE, 1914-1994

North-South vulnerable. South deals

NORTH
♠ J 6 5
♡ A K
◇ J 9 8 7 6
♣ 9 3 2

WEST
♠ 10 9 8 2
♡ 10 9
◇ Q 10
♣ A 10 6 5 4

EAST
♠ K 7 4
♡ 8 7 6 5 3 2
◇ A 3
♣ J 7

SOUTH
♠ A Q 3
♡ Q J 4
◇ K 5 4 2
♣ K Q 8

The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1◇	Pass	3◇	Pass
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

Opening lead: Five of ♣

The old order continues to change. It is with great regret that we learned of the death of Jean Besse, one of the greatest technicians the game has seen.

A truly modest man, you would have to learn from another that he was the youngest-ever student to win the highest honors in mathematics at the Ecole Polutechnicum de Eurich. But his brilliance at the table and as an analyst was there for all to admire. A quiet man of wit and humor, his trademark was the cigarette clutched between the middle and ring fingers of his right hand.

His defense on this hand earned him the Bols Brilliancy Prize in 1982. He held the East cards against three no trump, a contract that rated to make because West held no entry.

Declarer made an excellent play when, after a club lead, he allowed East's jack to hold the first trick in an effort to sever the defender's communications. The seven of clubs was returned to the queen and ace, and another club was returned to force out declarer's stopper. On this trick Besse discarded the ace of diamonds!

Outside of diamonds, declarer had only six tricks. Had Besse held onto the ace, a diamond to the king would allow declarer to score four tricks in the suit while keeping West off lead. After East's spectacular jettison play, however, declarer could come to only seven tricks before yielding the lead to West, who cashed two more club tricks for a one-trick set.

Where Have You Been?

Renowned Irish Band

The Bar Stool Bungie Jumpers

playing every night until

15th January at Jugglers.

From 9:30pm-1:00am

Jugglers Bar

THE CRACK IS MIGHTY
COME & SEE THEM

JOB VACANCIES

A larger industrial concern is seeking to employ suitably qualified and experienced personnel to fill the following positions for its expansion works at the southern end of the Dead Sea.

1. **Geotechnical Engineer (1).**
The candidate shall have a BSc in Civil Engineering with a min. 12 years of experience in the construction of dams, earthfill structures, instrumentation and related matters. "Experience in contract administration in responsible position is desirable and sound background in the use of computer is essential."

2. **Laboratory Engineer (1).**
The candidate shall have a university degree in Civil Engineering or Material Testing with a min. of 5 years experience in soil testing.

3. **Quantity Surveyor (1).**
the candidate should be a college graduate (preferably with a university degree) and shall have a min. 8 years experience in "quantity take-offs and checking of contractor's monthly statements ."

4. **Land Surveyors (2).**
Candidates shall have and intermediate college degree or equivalent with a min. 10 years experience in earthworks, roads and dams.

5. **Inspector (4).**
Candidates shall have an intermediate college degree with a min. 10 years experience in earthworks, roads and dams.

6. **Laboratory Technicians (2).**
Candidates shall have an intermediate college degree with a min. 10 years experience in earthworks, roads and dams.

* All applications will be treated confidentially.
* All applicants for engineering posts shall have a current membership of the Jordan Engineers Association.
* A good command of written and spoken English is required (essential).
* Applications to be submitted by post or faxed not later than 20/1/1996 to the following address :-

P.O.Box 1470,
Code 11118,
Amman - Jordan,
Fax : 03 377134.

U.S. not concerned over Saudi leadership, bombing, Perry says

RIYADH (R) — The United States is confident of Saudi Arabia's new leader and has prepared a new military plan to defend the kingdom and other Gulf states from Iraq and Iran, U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry said on Saturday.

Mr. Perry arrived in Saudi capital earlier in the day bearing a letter from President Bill Clinton for ailing King Fahd, who turned the leadership of the kingdom over to his younger brother Crown Prince Abdullah last week after the 73-year-old monarch suffered a stroke in November.

It was Mr. Perry's third visit to Saudi Arabia in 15 months, but the first since a carbomb ripped a military building in Riyadh Nov. 13, killing five Americans and a Filipino. He said authorities did not yet know who was responsible.

"We believe the kingdom is in very good hands," Mr. Perry told reporters travelling with him from Oman on a three-day Middle East visit. "We believe the situation is stable and we have great confidence in Abdullah."

Mr. Perry met on Saturday night with Defence Mnister Prince Sultan and said he would meet the crown prince on Sunday to deliver the letter for the King, "wishing him a speedy recovery and giving him our view that, in the meantime, we believe the kingdom is in very good hands."

Army General Binford Peay, chief of the U.S. Central Command, said that Mr. Perry had recently approved a new "contingency plan" for defending the Gulf, although that plan was still being refined.

They refused to be more specific, but said the United States recently began prepositioning armoured equipment for another battalion of U.S. military equipment in Qatar and had increased its air attack potential in the region.

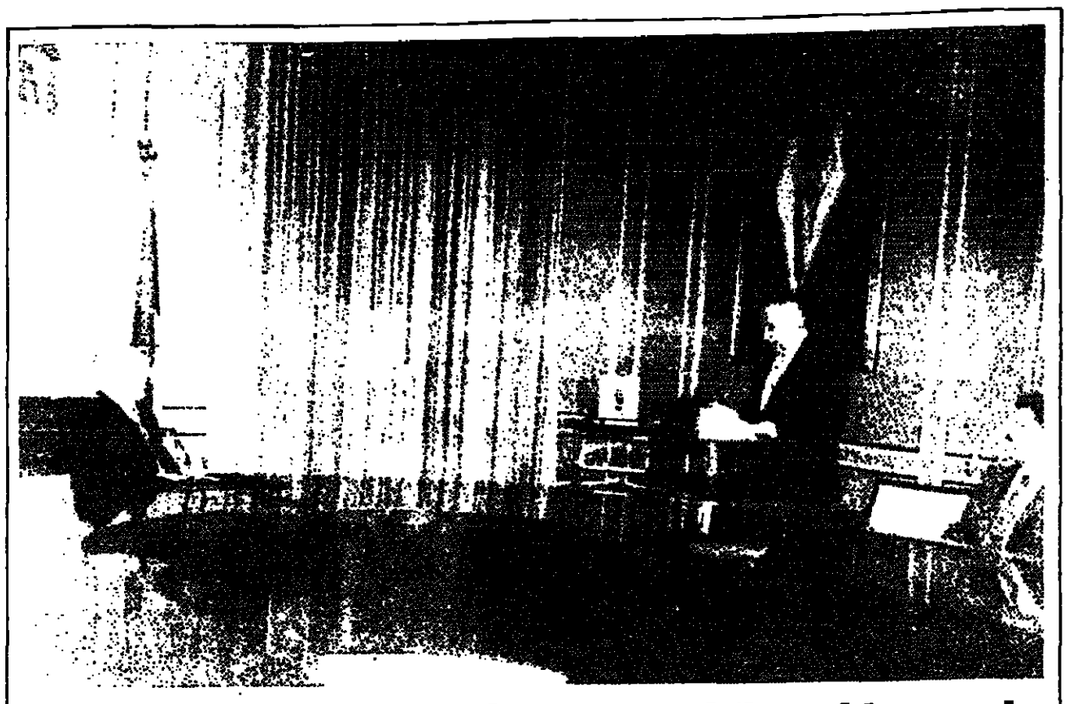
U.S. officials travelling with Mr. Perry said that there were now 13,000 U.S. troops in the Gulf region, including sailors and airmen on U.S. warships.

"He (Perry) approved the plan," said Gen. Peay. "I'll simply say from central command's perspective, we have enough forces for the plan and we have a very good plan to be executed if required to do so."

The United States, which led an international coalition in defeat of Iraq in the 1991 Gulf war, began increasing its military presence in the Gulf again in October 1994 after Iraq briefly moved large numbers of forces near the Kuwaiti border.

As for the November bombing of a building used by the U.S. military in Riyadh for training the Saudi National Guard, Mr. Perry said the blast did not worry Washington unduly.

"We don't know yet who perpetrated that act," he told reporters.



Zarqa voices allegiance to King Hussein

His Majesty King Hussein received at the Royal Court Saturday Zarqa Mayor Mustafa Fayyad accompanied by members of the Zarqa Municipal Council who handed the King a document expressing Zarqa residents' absolute allegiance to the Hashemite Throne.

The document, which bore the signatures of prominent personalities in the city voiced support for the King's untiring effort to serve the country and people.

The King replied by expressing his appreciation to the municipal council and the Zarqa inhabitants at large saying he hoped to meet more often with citizens of Zarqa which, he said, is dear to him.

He asked the delegation to convey his greetings and best wishes to the inhabitants of Zarqa city.

The document, which was read out by Mr. Fayyad in the attendance of Chief of the Royal Court Marwan Al Qasem and the King's advisors, was handed to the King by the mayor *(Petra photo)*

Moussa bids to resolve islands dispute

SANAA (Agencies) — Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Mussa left here for Eritrea on Saturday on the second leg of a shuttle mission aimed at resolving a dispute over a strategic chain of Red Sea islands, officials said.

Mr. Moussa said after talks with Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh that Egypt backed Sanaa's position which sought a "peaceful solution of its conflict and favours dialogue to reach it."

He told journalists he had discussed "ideas and proposals linked to a solution" but refused to go into detail before leaving for Asmara.

Eritrea captured the Red Sea island of Hanish Al Kabir from Yemen Dec. 18, part of an archipelago of nine guarding access to busy shipping lanes, after three days of fighting which left nine soldiers dead.

Mr. Moussa also handed Mr. Saleh a message from his Egyptian counterpart Hosni Mubarak about Egypt's mediation in the dispute, the official Yemeni news agency Saba reported.

Mr. Saleh told Moussa that Yemen welcomed any efforts by friendly countries to find a peaceful solution to the conflict over maritime borders, Saba said.

"Egypt wants the countries bordering the Red Sea to maintain navigation and the security of this waterway," a Yemeni official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told AFP on Friday.

Ethiopia is also trying to persuade both nations to find a peaceful solution to the problem of the islands, which guard the straits at the southern entrance to the Red Sea.

Meanwhile, officials and diplomats here said France had also agreed to examine the possibilities of mediating in the conflict.

French "President Jacques Chirac voiced the readiness of his country to undertake a mediation" in a message to Mr. Saleh handed over Saturday by French ambassador Marcel Langel, Saba said.

Diplomats said France "has agreed to look at an eventual mediation" at the request of Sanaa and Asmara.

Mr. Chirac stressed in his message France's "commitment to security and stability to the Red Sea."

On Friday Ethiopia's Foreign Minister was quoted as saying Eritrea and Yemen have agreed in principle to withdraw their forces from the disputed island but the two sides are still wrangling over who will move first.

Explosion injures French Soldier

Mostar tension running high

SARAJEVO (AP) — A French soldier was injured Saturday by an explosion and a Croat policeman was killed in the divided city of Mostar.

But NATO officials reported that Bosnia's rivals mostly were complying with the peace deal to withdraw from front lines and ensure that they are out of the country by Jan. 19.

The Frenchman, wounded while on foot patrol in Sarajevo's Dobrinja suburb, was the seventh casualty since the NATO peacekeeping force took over the Bosnia peace mission from the United Nations Dec. 20.

On Thursday, an Italian soldier wounded in the arm by gunfire became the first NATO soldier hurt by hostile fire.

The French soldier, who was not identified, was with a patrol monitoring withdrawal of Bosnia's rival forces from a front-line area.

It was not immediately clear whether he was injured by a mine or an unexploded shell. NATO officials said he was transferred to the French medical facility in the city with a suspected broken ankle.

Four British and one American soldiers have been wounded by mines.

On Thursday, Italian military engineer, CPl. Elio Sbordoni, was wounded in the arm by an unknown attacker who opened fire on a hotel complex in Serb-held Vogosca, just north of Sarajevo. The complex is to be the main headquarters of Italy's 2,500 soldiers in Bosnia. Italian soldiers returned fire to defend Sbordoni, firing in anger for the first time.

In Mostar, a Croat policeman was killed Saturday by gunfire that local police said came from the Muslim-controlled eastern side. He died in the hospital of his wounds, said European Union (EU) police spokesman Howard Fox.

Mostar was more tense than it has been at any time since Croats and Muslims stopped fighting there almost two years ago.

Two nights before, two off-duty Muslim policemen were seriously wounded by a burst of gunfire hitting their car as it drove along a former front line in Croat-held western Mostar.

EU officials said indications were that the fire came from the Croat side. Earlier in the week, a Muslim man was shot dead by Croat police after failing to heed demands to stop the car.

Hans Kosachnik, a German who is the EU's administrator for divided Mostar, expressed alarm about the deteriorating relations between Croats and Muslims there.

In the northwestern town of Mrkonjic Grad, a building housing about 60 British troops was destroyed by fire. No one was injured and cause of the fire was unknown, said NATO spokesman Lt. Col. David Shaw.

Mrkonjic Grad fell to Croat forces last fall, but is to be transferred to Serb authority under the peace deal. In November and December, Croat engaged in widespread torching of property.

The first major task of the NATO-led force, ultimately to number 60,000, is to oversee the withdrawal of Bosnia's rivals two kilometres from front lines by Jan. 19. NATO will then police the demilitarised zones.

Brig. Gen. Andrew Cumming, a NATO official in Sarajevo, said that in some instances the parties were "moving far faster than we anticipated."

However, in the far north, near the hotly contested Posavina corridor — the only link between Serb holdings in east and west — there were some difficulties, he said.

Serb forces had complained to the force that Croats were to moving toward compliance. But Gen. Cumming predicted the Jan. 19 deadline would be met.

He also reported that Mujahedeen, Islamic fundamentalist fighters who fought with the Muslim-led government army, were leaving the country. All foreign soldiers must be out of Bosnia by Jan. 19.

Syrian army says nearing parity with Israeli forces

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The Syrian army has made progress in its attempts to achieve a military balance with Israel and will continue to bolster its capability to deter aggression, its deputy chief of staff said in remarks published here Saturday.

General Hassan Turkmani, author of several military books, said Israel had the biggest armed forces in the world in relation to the size of its population.

"Our armed forces have made great strides in achieving a military balance with the Zionist (Israeli) enemy within the framework of realising strategic parity as stated by President Hafez Al Assad, Gen. Turkmani told the United Arab Emirates armed forces magazine, Al Difaa Al Khaleeji (Gulf Defence).

"In our current circumstances and the continuation of the state of non-war non-peace, the role of the military concept becomes more important. So, we should be ready strategically in peace and in war and prepare everything necessary to deter aggression or achieve victory in case of aggression."

Syria and other Arab countries have fought four major wars against Israel but have failed to eject it from occupied Arab land by force. Arab states have blamed the superior Israeli military machine for their defeat.

Syria, which has one of the strongest Arab armies, has long sought to attain military parity with Israel.

Ethiopians attack two Sudanese army posts

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Ethiopian troops attacked two Sudanese army posts along the border between the two countries, an independent Khartoum newspaper said Saturday, although there was no official confirmation of the report.

In a dispatch from the eastern city of Geddaref, the Akhbar Al Youm newspaper said the Ethiopian attacks had taken place last week in the Basalam area and at Hamarai.

"The armed forces... have managed to respond to these provocative acts and inflicted heavy casualties on the attacking forces," it said, quoting a high-level source in the Geddaref state government.

Sudan's press has spoken of armed engagements along the Sudan-Ethiopia border for the past few days, but the government in Khartoum has refrained from confirming or denying such incidents.

Meanwhile, the Libyan army's commander-in-chief, who ended a visit to Sudan on Thursday, was quoted in a military publication Saturday as saying his country would side with Sudan if the latter was attacked by a foreign power.

"Libya stays in the same trench with Sudan and will back it if it faces security threats from Western imperialist powers or neighbouring African countries," Abu Bakr Younis told the Al Nasr (Victory) weekly.

He did not refer to any specific African country.

Meanwhile, a Sudanese official charged that Sudanese opposition figures were being trained in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon.

Turkey prison riots continue

ANKARA (AFP) — Prison unrest in Turkey appeared no closer to a resolution Saturday as inmates continued to hold 29 guards and a prison director hostage, Turkey's Human Rights Association (IHD) said.

The hostages were being held by leftist inmates at Bayrampasa in Istanbul and at Buca, near Izmir in western Turkey, to protest the bloody suppression of a riot in Istanbul's high-security Umraniye prison in which three prisoners were killed and 28 injured Thursday.

Those who died belonged to the extremist revolutionary left guerrilla group which has killed scores of security force members. It changed its name last year to the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party.

Unrest at Umraniye was continuing, with inmates demanding the sacking of prison authorities they blamed for Thursday's bloodshed. They were also demanding an improvement in conditions, including more visiting rights and an officially recognised spokesman.

Thursday's riot was itself a protest against the deaths of six inmates at other Turkish jails in the past few days.

U.N. relief convoy brings food to Kabul

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — A United Nations truck convoy Saturday delivered thousands of tonnes of desperately needed food aid to the war battered Afghan capital.

U.N. officials from the World Food Programme (WFP) had earlier warned that without additional relief supplies, Kabul residents could face starvation with the onset of winter's bitter weather.

Rebels surrounding the city have almost completely isolated Kabul, cutting all but one supply route into the capital.

Using that last road, a convoy of 93 trucks, carrying more than 2,500 tonnes of wheat and flour, rolled into central Kabul from the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad on Saturday.

It was the single largest delivery of supplies into Kabul, a WFP official told the Associated Press.

"We have never brought such an amount into Kabul before in an afternoon," said Ismael Omar, director of the WFP's Kabul office. "This represents about two weeks supply for us."

The $900,000 worth of wheat and flour will be used to feed orphans, widows and many of the city's disabled residents, Mr. Omar said.

The U.N. operates a subsidised bakery in Kabul where residents can purchase bread with special tokens. About 166,000 people benefit from the bakery project.

"These people are the most needy from among the poor, the disabled, widows and recently returned refugees," Mr. Omar said.

The WFP also provides food to hospitals and schools in the city.

The food aid arrived in Kabul with little time to spare as supplies for the city's estimated one million residents were almost spent and no relief was in sight from the factional war around the capital.

"People's resources are exhausted and now, with winter here, this is the time they need help most," Mr. Omar said.

Despite the delivery of short term food aid, some relief workers in Kabul fear the city could still face a crisis without additional supplies.

Relief agencies need better and more frequent access to the city, said Peter Stocker, the head of delegation for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Afghanistan.

"The current pipeline will not cover the identified needs," he said. "We hope to open the road from the north for Red Cross convoys."

Kabul's northern access route, once a major supply line into the city, was cut off by rebel forces loyal to former communist General Rashid Dostum.

Iraq, Iran want Amman meeting to tackle sanctions imposed on them

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Iran and Iraq Saturday said that they hope that the Amman Declaration, a document which is to cover various development issues pertaining to Asia, would take into consideration the "unjustified" economic actions taken against these two countries.

The draft declaration, is expected to be announced at the end of a current two-day preparatory meeting, held in advance of the 8th Asian Ministerial Meeting for the Group of 77.

Officials from Iraq and Iran participating in the meeting hosted in Amman told the Jordan Times that developing countries are now being faced with a new form of external pressure from powerful international organisations and individual states which manifests itself in coercive economic measures, "singling out," Third World countries for different political purposes.

Iran has been accused by many in the international community of funding and supporting terrorist acts, and Iraq has been accused of not complying with U.N. Security Council resolutions concerning its nuclear arsenal. Both suffer from economic sanctions: U.N. sanctions against Iraq, U.S. sanctions against Iran.

Iraq and other developing countries, which share similar worsening economic conditions such as poverty, unemployment and indebtedness, as well as political pressure, should stand together against "those states which are imposing their political will on us, and expecting us to be their sub-servants," said Raheem Hussein, commercial attaché at the Iraqi embassy in Amman.

Mr. Hussein said although Iraq had recognised the state of Kuwait, the U.N. sanctions imposed on Baghdad since its 1991 invasion of the emirate have not been lifted.

Iraq has been urging the international community to help lift the embargo.

The sanctions are severely affecting the development of Iraq, said Mr. Hussein, adding that thousands of children and the elderly are dying every day because of the embargo.

"I hope that Arab states would respond positively to our calls, and that the Amman Declaration will adopt a paragraph concerning the lifting of the embargo," Mr. Hussein said.

Both Iranian and Iraqi officials said that they hoped that the Amman Declaration which was to be drafted yesterday, will include a paragraph calling for lifting the embargo on Iraq and cancelling the effect of extraterritorial application of domestic laws "forced" on other countries.

The extraterritorial application of domestic law is an individual country policy which imposes restrictions on other countries which deal with particular states (Iran for example) and thus has the ability to cause economic hardship on these countries, according to Bozorgmehr Ziaran, the ambassador and deputy permanent representative of the Iranian mission to the U.N. in Geneva.

Mr. Ziaran, told the Jordan Times that the Iranian delegation intends to insist on the inclusion of a paragraph which makes the extraterritorial application of domestic law null and void.

Such laws are illegal, said Mr. Ziaran, because they are not part of U.N. Security Council resolutions nor any General Assembly resolution.

According to Mr. Ziaran, since such laws are illegal, they are hence not binding.

"(They) are used for political purposes against developing countries," he said.

Both Mr. Hussein and Mr. Ziaran hope that the Amman Declaration which will be the working agenda for the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to be held in South Africa in April, will adopt their recommendations.

COLUMN 8

First Briton walks to South Pole

LONDON (AFP) — Explorer David Hempleman-Adams has become the first Briton to walk solo and unsupported to the South Pole after ending a 60-day trek across Antarctica, his expedition team here has announced. The 39-year-old businessman pulled his sledge containing supplies for 1,100 kilometres from Hercules Inlet on the edge of the region. The bulk of his trek was in headwind conditions with temperatures of below minus 40 degrees Celsius, with blizzards and ice ridges up to two metres high. His success came a month after another Briton, Roger Meare, had to abandon his crossing of Antarctica after problems with his sledge. Mr. Hempleman-Adams started his walk on Nov. 7. His sledge then weighed more than 128 kilograms, shrinking by about 1.5 kilos a day as he ate his way through his provisions. He lost over 9 kilos in weight during the trip because the amount of food was limited by how much he could pull, his spokesman said. Eleven years ago he was the first man to walk solo and unsupported to the magnetic North Pole, and in 1992 he led the team which was the first unsupported to the geomagnetic North Pole. He has also climbed the highest peak in each continent, including Mount Everest. Last month Norwegian Borge Ousland gave up his attempt to trek across the Antarctic alone due to severe frostbite.

Four held for smuggling women to China

HANOI (AFP) — Four men have been arrested in northern Vietnam for smuggling women into China to be sold as brides or prostitutes, a report has said. Four men led by an ethnic Chinese named as Che Pho Sang recruited women in the south of Vietnam and lured them north with offers of jobs as waitresses, the Lao Dong newspaper said. Four women were taken to the border crossing at Mong Cai in northern Quang Ninh province but three escaped. The fourth women was sold for 1.3 million dong ($110), the report said. An estimated 5,000 Vietnamese women have been sold to neighbouring countries in the past five years. Many have been sold into prostitution in Taiwan, Macau and Cambodia, according to women's groups here. Southern China's growing wealth has boosted the human trade from Vietnam, where incomes are still significantly lower.

Give us official bikes, say Green MPs

BONN (AFP) — Some politicians crave official limousines: others are partial to taxpayer-financed trips in helicopters or military aircraft. But all Germany's Green MPs want is a fleet of official bicycles. They said as much this week, in an official request to the Bundestag, or lower house of parliament. The alliance 90/Greens Party, the country's third biggest grouping, said it wanted a fleet of solid two-wheelers with all the necessary attachments for hauling around the voluminous files that most MPs are burdened with. The proposal even included a request for a parliamentary repair workshop and of course for reserved bicycle parking slots.